SIX PORTRAITS

DELLA ROBBIA
CORREGGIO
BLAKE : COROT
GEORGE FULLER
WINSLOW HOMER

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SIX PORTRAITS

DELLA ROBBIA, CORREGGIO, BLAKE, COROT, GEORGE FULLER, WINSLOW HOMER

BY

MRS. SCHUYLER VAN RENSSELAER

Ce que nous appelons le talent réside dans le je ne sais quoi d'indéfinissable qui est la personne même. La preuve en est que cette personne une fois disparue, cette nuance de talent aura, elle aussi, disparu pour toujours. — PAUL BOURGET.

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To

CANDACE WHEELER

IN LOVE AND GRATITUDE.

THESE Essays are reprinted by the kind permission of the publishers of the *Century Magazine*, the *American Architect and Building News*, and the *American Art Review*. One of them has been entirely rewritten from a different point of view, two have been considerably enlarged, and all have been carefully corrected.

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INTRODUCTION.

In associating six artists so far apart in time and character, I have tried to bind them together by a tangible connecting thread. Indeed, two such threads have guided me in writing.

First of all, I wanted to show the meaning of individuality in art; to illustrate what Emerson implied when he said Art is Nature "passed through the alembic of man." The main thing for an artist is to express himself — to clarify his sensations, and develop some adequate form of speech. He is not a mere recorder. He is an interpreter. He neither copies nor falsifies the facts of nature. He transmutes them, giving them new beauties and a new meaning drawn from the essence of his own soul. If I have made this fact at all clear with regard to the six artists whom I have tried to explain, the great difference between them should but accent its significance.

But if it is the part of the artist to "insist on himself," it is the part of the student to put himself in perfect sympathy now with one artist and now with another; and this is the second general truth I have wished to illustrate. The main thing for an artist is to learn to express himself; the main thing for an intelligent observer is to learn to appreciate all forms of speech and all ideas that are well expressed. No kind of art is better than all others. No painter or sculptor who has ever lived can be called greater than all his fellows. Every one who has deserved the name has been right in his own way; and the more ways we can understand and value, the higher and truer will be our love for each. A catholic creed in art is the only creed that is honorable to the worshipped and wholesome for the worshipper.

There is another word of explanation that should perhaps be said. Many qualities in a work of art are absolute and fixed, but many are more indeterminate. These largely reside in the eye of the spectator. He has a right to explain them as he sees them, but no right to impose them upon the eyes of others. He may speak with

assurance of a picture as having purity of line, richness of color, or dignity in composition; or as being, in a general way, poetic or prosaic, individual or commonplace. But when he attempts to define a poetic flavor, to explain an emotional meaning, or to assert the presence of compelling charm or its reverse, then it behooves him to speak cautiously, for then the qualities which he perceives may be born of his own mental attitude rather than the painter's. When he tries to record such impressions as these his only device can be *Comme je l'entends*, and it should be displayed as an apology, not as a challenge. Thus I quote it here, meaning that I have sincerely tried to understand the artists of whom I write, yet am ready to confess that the understanding of others, in some important points, may be different from my own.

M. G. VAN RENSSELAER.

9 WEST NINTH STREET, NEW YORK.

SIX PORTRAITS.

I.

LUCA DELLA ROBBIA.

1400?–1482.

Among all the sculptors of the early Italian Renaissance none is better known by name than Luca della Robbia. Nor are tourists apt to realize that they may have failed to understand and appreciate his art. They are more prone to think that in the vast panorama of Florentine delights it made an especially clear and adequate impression. Nevertheless, there are few great artists to whom fuller justice has not been done. There are few who have been so carelessly studied, whose best work is so often overlooked in favor of that which is less good, whose reputation rests on such superficial grounds. Luca is popularly known not in the essence of his art, but

merely as the inventor of a novel, striking, and attractive technical process. Not the intrinsic character of his work, but the fact that most of it was executed in enamelled colored terra-cotta — this is what the world at large remembers.

I.

I do not know whether to call Luca fortunate or unfortunate in the invention of the process which he made so famous. Its results have a peculiar charm and a marked utility of their own. Their durability fitted them well for exterior architectural decoration, and into this they brought a note of clear pure color not otherwise to be obtained in combination with admirable form and the relief that gives admirable light and shade; and they were just as well adapted to an almost pictorial use inside the palace or the church. If we consider the legacy of the Della Robbia family as a whole, and remember what a unique yet lavish and varied gift it is, we cannot regret that Luca left bronze and marble and turned to clay instead. But his own art suffered by the exchange. In any state clay is a less delightful material than bronze

or marble; and when it is covered with a smooth enamel, the very quality that makes it so useful and so tempting — the brilliant hardness of its surface — joins with the conditions of its making to put its results, considered from the purely artistic point of view, below the results of metal and stone. We see this very clearly when we contrast Luca's early works in these materials with even the best among his terra-cottas. Yet his terra-cottas are so much more "striking," so much more conspicuous in the sum of Renaissance sculpture, that the others are half-forgotten by the world in its estimating of his art.

This would matter less, however, were no terra-cottas called his but those which are his own. But a peculiar confusion has been the result of peculiar circumstances. Luca was only one among many sculptors who made enamelled statues and reliefs; yet the process by which enamelled colors could be successfully applied to such broad and varied surfaces was for long a secret. For many years it was exercised only in ateliers directed by men who bore Luca's name, who were inspired by his ideals, and whose results kept a strong family likeness

to his own. All the other Della Robbias were his inferiors, yet even the connoisseur is often puzzled to decide which works are his and which are theirs, and the superficial eye can hardly understand that there is any difference between them. In Italy every enamelled terra-cotta is, popularly, a Della Robbia, and almost every Della Robbia is a Luca. Even when there is evidence to the contrary no one cares to cite it. Who wants to remember, for example, that the famous *bambini* on the Hospital of the Innocents in Florence are the children not of Luca but of Andrea? And how often have we not heard Luca named even in connection with the great frieze at Pistoja, a work of much later date, which has absolutely no affinity with the subject-matter or with the spirit of his art?

It is always thus with artists who have forcibly impressed a school; but it is thus with Luca, I should say, much more conspicuously than with any other, for his school long kept uncommonly close to his mood and manner, employed a process not employed by others, and was not merely a school but a family too. Had he employed only stone and bronze he would not have

been so closely copied or so long repeated. His popularity would have been diminished by the fact, and by the substitution of a usual for an unusual material. The world would not know his name any better than it knows the name of a still greater sculptor — Donatello; it would probably not know it any better than the name of Della Quercia or of Mino da Fiesole. But his work would all have been of his very best; and when his name was mentioned, it would always have been as that of a great sculptor, not, as too commonly to-day, — though most unjustly even when his terra-cottas are in question, — as that of a clever decorator, a skilful, pleasing artist of a kind below the best.

A great sculptor he was indeed, inferior to few even in the race to which he belonged, the greatest race of sculptors that has lived since the Greek. We will not speak of Michael Angelo; there is no term of comparison between him and any other. But we may compare Luca with all the rest of Italy and at least be rational in the act. He is not by many degrees so noble as Ghiberti, for example, or so superb as Andrea Sansovino, or so strong as Dona-

tello; but he is more charming, more lovable than either. Perhaps, too, he is not to be called as "original" as was Ghiberti in his idealism, or Donatello in his realism; but he was extremely original in the way he combined these two qualities. In his exquisite poise between their two extremes — a poise which is not cold neutrality, but a vital hold on either side — he is as individual as any of his fellows. Does the world which "knows" him so well quite realize all this? Has he not paid perhaps too great a price for his somewhat shallow popularity, and for the gratitude he gets as the creator of a distinct *genre* in sculptured work?

Fortunately the critics are beginning to tell the world what he really was. In 1855 M. Barbet de Joui wrote a good book about the family; and two years earlier, M. Delaborde, while considering specially the latest Della Robbias, in his "Château du Bois de Boulogne," had given an admirable introductory sketch of their great ancestor. In 1878 Herr Bode published a large volume of the studious German sort, entitled "Die Künstler Familie Della Robbia." But there was still great need of

another work which should have a more popular interest, and should unite thorough historical research with keen artistic criticism. This work we have in the shape of a fully illustrated quarto, "Les Della Robbia," written by Emile Molinier, one of the *conservateurs* of the Louvre collections, and J. Cavalucci, Professor in the Fine-Arts Academy at Florence, and published in 1884. In its preparation many unedited documents were consulted, some of which are given in an appendix, together with a long *catalogue raisonné* wherein hundreds of works attributed to the family are clearly described and, so far as possible, attributed to their real creators. The many woodcuts are not of such excellence as we in America should demand; but they are assisted by a few sympathetic etchings, and make up in number for what they lack in individual perfection. They give the reader a good idea if not of the quality at least of the general character of the art discussed. They will help him to know a Luca or an Andrea when he sees it, though they do not suggest a tithe of the beauty he will find in either.

Taking this book as a guide in all matters

of disputed fact, consulting the others I have named, and not forgetting Mr. Pater's delightful essay,[1] it is no hard task to tell the story of Luca della Robbia and his descendants. Yet it is a long and varied tale, beginning with an organ-loft in Florence, ending with a statue of Catherine de Medici in Paris, and covering a period of a century and a half.

II.

Luca della Robbia was born in Florence, as appears from an authentic document, some twelve years later than Vasari says — in 1399 or 1400. Like many contemporary artists he was apprenticed to a goldsmith, but soon exchanged his craft for work in bronze and marble. Again like many others, his youthful industry seems to have been prodigious. Most of Vasari's anecdotes must be abandoned, and with them, perhaps, the statement of Baldinucci that he studied with Ghiberti. His work certainly exhibits traces of Ghiberti's influence, but not more strongly than of Donatello's. It is probable that in his early years he travelled, but dates and destina-

[1] In *Studies in the History of the Italian Renaissance.*

tions are alike uncertain. He never married, was intensely devoted to his art, and almost equally so to the education of his nephews, especially of Andrea, who was to be the inheritor of his talent and the participator in his fame. One realizes the great contrasts of Renaissance life when one compares, for instance, the story of Benvenuto Cellini with the story, if so it can be called, of Luca della Robbia. Luca has, indeed, no history save the history of his work. Until his death in 1482 he led with his nephews, in a little house on the Via Guelfa, a uniform, peaceful, almost austere existence.

His character is undoubtedly reflected in a clear and faithful manner in his art; and we may thence affirm that no one can have been more serene, more tender, more cheerful, or more pure. In a very prosaic place, in his last testament, we find an almost poetic touch that helps to paint his household for us. It is well known that Andrea, as but natural, was his best beloved. Yet to Simone, Andrea's brother, he leaves all his worldly goods, and to Andrea only (*he* does not say "only"), his fame and the art which he had taught him.

We must needs rank Andrea a space below his uncle as an artist; yet how rare a chance it was that such a fame should find so true a guardian, such an art so good a pupil. It was not, in truth, an art of his own that Andrea practised; it was merely the sequel of his uncle's; and if no one's work but Andrea's had been confounded with that of the great master, there would be far less to complain of than there is to-day.

Luca's reputation was very great with his contemporaries; Vasari tells this plainly, and it is still more plainly told by the fact that in 1471 he was obliged by his age and weakness to decline the greatest honor in the power of his fellow-craftsmen to bestow — the presidency of the Corporation of Florentine Artists. He was thirty years old when Florence first gave him an important work to do, though doubtless he had already labored with a score of others on the exterior of the cathedral. This work, his masterpiece, I should say, considering execution and conception both, was a tribune for the organ in the cathedral. Its ten marble reliefs, representing children and symbolizing "Music," are now — to-

gether with a corresponding series, wrought by Donatello for the other tribune — in the National Museum at Florence. We may regret on principle that they are not placed in their true position; yet we gain by the possibility of close inspection.

In 1447, these reliefs being still unfinished, Luca received another important commission, to complete the sculptures on the Campanile begun by Giotto and Andrea Pisano. Three years later both undertakings had been accomplished. A charming work, dating from 1442, is a tabernacle, built for the Chapel of St. Luke in the Hospital of Santa Maria Nuova, but now in the church of Santa Maria at Peretola. It is a rich little architectural structure of marble with a *Pietà* in its pediment; but its frieze is ornamented with heads of cherubim wrought in white enamelled clay. A similar combination of materials — the enamel being in this case colored — is to be seen in the tomb of Benozzi Federhigi, Bishop of Fiesole, which also has been moved from its original station — from Fiesole to the Church of San Francesco di Paola near Bellosguardo. Sumptuous architectural sepulchres were among the most

frequent works of the Renaissance. Many others have been attributed to Luca, but with regard to only one other can we be quite sure, and this, cited by Vasari, has unfortunately disappeared.

Among Luca's works in bronze the chief still survives. It is the door to the sacristy of the Florentine cathedral, which he began in collaboration with Michelozzo and Maso di Bartolomeo, but completed by himself after having had it in hand no less than thirty years.

Vasari tells us that Luca was discouraged at the slowness of his processes and the consequent paucity of his rewards; that he perceived the greater facility with which clay might be fashioned, and set himself, therefore, to the discovery of some coating by means of which it might be made as durable as stone. One is tempted to believe, rather, that it was the desire for color which prompted his investigations, or more exactly, the desire to combine color and durability. After many essays, Vasari adds, he did in truth "discover" an impervious enamel, and by its "invention" won great renown. From these words many have inferred that Luca was literally

the first in Italy to use stanniferous enamel in any way, and thus the real parent of all the Italian majolicas. But there is documentary evidence enough to prove that enamelled faience had long been known in the peninsula, probably for more than two centuries before Luca worked with it. Nor was he by any means the first to use terra-cotta for architectural decoration; nor again, to color statues — this had been done all through the Middle Ages and in the ancient world as well. Yet he was a real discoverer and inventor in another way, in his combination of these different practices. He was the first to *apply color by means of enamel to sculpture in relief and this to monumental decoration.* Such is the sum of his originality, and I think it is great enough.

III.

It is a common idea that at first Luca used only blue and white in his enamels. He always used them, of course, much more largely than any other colors, but from the very beginning he seems to have introduced other tints in carrying out his details. We find, for example, green, violet, and yellow in the tympanum representing the "Resur-

rection" which he placed in 1443 above the entrance for which his bronze door was wrought; and this is his earliest dated terra-cotta, though probably not his first attempt, since the difficult technical process is already used with perfect success. Next among dated examples comes the corresponding tympanum over the other door of the sacristy, which represents the "Ascension." Here too we find all the colors I have named and brown besides. And we find them all again in the cupola of the Chapel of the Pazzi family in Santa Croce, which is evidently one of his earlier works and certainly one of his finest essays in decoration.

It is another common belief that Luca very often used white enamel without any color. But this is also questioned by his latest biographers, who think that it was exceptional for him to omit color, and attribute almost all the many existing white Della Robbias to a time as late as the sixteenth century, the last and weakest period of the school.

Vasari speaks of two beautiful nude angels of gilded bronze, which Luca wrought "in the round," and placed above his or-

gan-gallery in the cathedral; but they have disappeared, and the only detached figures we know to be his are terra-cottas — the two kneeling angels with candelabra in the sacristy. They are far superior to the many analogous statues produced by his successors, yet they do not take their place among his very best creations.

Two of Luca's beautiful medallions on the outside of 'Or San Michele in Florence — the two which represent armorial bearings — are not in relief but merely colored flat, and are therefore properly to be called majolicas. Similar works have been attributed to him in great numbers, but the authenticity of almost all is very doubtful. Conspicuous among them are the twelve large circular plaques, which the authorities of the South Kensington Museum believe were part of the ceiling of a room in the Medici Palace. Such a room, we know, was decorated throughout by Luca, even to its flooring; and in the work he used enamels both flat and in relief. But there is no evidence, either extrinsic or intrinsic, to prove that these illustrations of the "Months" were ever a part of it; and I may add that their beauty is not so very

great that we need wish to insist upon Luca's authorship.

Certain terra-cottas that are not enamelled, and that yet apparently are Luca's, were most likely studies or models for his other works. There is one in the Berlin Museum, for instance, which must have served in the execution of his bronze door.

I cannot here repeat even the short list of terra-cottas which may with certainty or with good likelihood be given Luca's name. I can only cite one or two of the most important. One of his finest tympana crowns a door on the Via dell' Agnolo in Florence, and shows the Virgin and Child between lily-bearing angels. Very remarkable, too, and in a very different way, is the vault of the Chapel of the Cardinal of Portugal in San Miniato. It is entirely faced with colored enamels, a chequered surface of yellow, green, and black forming the background for five great blue and white medallions in relief. The central one bears the Holy Dove surrounded by gilded rays ; the rest, half-figures of young angels symbolic of the cardinal virtues. These last reveal perhaps a stronger idealism than any of Luca's other enamels. His last authentic

and dated terra-cottas ornament the façade of San Domenico at Urbino. In the tympanum of the entrance, the bronze door for which was made by Maso di Bartolomeo, Luca has placed a Madonna and Child with two saints on either hand ; and in the pediment above he has set a circular relief with a half-length of God the Father, surrounded by angels and in an attitude of benediction. Maso's diary tells that he asked these works at Luca's hand (the only ones, it would seem, that Luca ever sent across the Apennines), and gives their date as well. Since it is so early a date as 1452, one feels sure that many another creation followed whose time cannot be fixed with such decision ; but we learn that during the last ten years of his life Luca was too feeble to do more than rejoice in Andrea's labors.

Among the many Della Robbias in non-Italian museums there is but one, it seems, which is indisputably a Luca. This is the huge polychrome relief with the arms of Réné of Anjou in the South Kensington collection. There are four others, however, and of greater importance, which one is tempted to ascribe to him, — the "Monk

Writing," also at South Kensington, and the three great circular reliefs in the Cluny Museum at Paris, two with allegoric figures of "Temperance" and "Faith," one with a Virgin and Child. The *rétable* in the Metropolitan Museum at New York is called, of course, a Luca but, as we shall see, it is an Andrea.

Let me add now that Luca did not repeat his terra-cottas — did not mould one in the pattern of another, but produced in each instance a wholly new creation; and I believe I may say as much for his immediate successors, though in later days replicas became all too common.

IV.

To make clear the value of Luca della Robbia's artistic personality, I must begin a long way back. I must note the influences that had been at work before his day as well as the contrasting individualities which stood next his own.

Between the seventh and eleventh centuries Italian sculpture was very poor in quality and by no means rich in quantity. In style it varied between a barbaric rudeness and a stiff Byzantine conventionality;

and monumental work in stone was almost abandoned for decorative work in metal. The development of Romanesque architecture brought about a revival, but a revival which had less originality and vigor than we find in contemporary work beyond the Alps. Architecture, the nursing mother of all the other arts, caused them to vary with her own varying desires. The southern architect loved breadth and repose where the northern loved animation and multitudinous detail; and he loved color more than form in decoration. Northern Romanesque depends more for its decorative beauty upon form in sculptured figures and architectural details; Tuscan more upon the hues of inlaid marbles and pictorial mosaics. The chisel's rôle was primary in the north; it was only accessory at the south. Of architectural detail proper we find comparatively little, and such figure-sculpture as there is takes the form of reliefs very much more often than the form of independent figures. At the beginning of the thirteenth century when Niccola Pisano was born, Italian sculpture could in no sense take rank with the Romanesque sculpture of the north, just beginning, as it was,

to develop into its still more admirable Gothic phase.

Color, I have said, was the chief love of the southern artist and the field in which his greatest triumphs were achieved. And the remark is true not only of those early days when sculpture was actually neglected in its favor, but of the period of full development as well — of the period when the sun of the Renaissance, expanding the many-petalled flower of art, produced sculpture which stands second only to the Greek; for the painting then produced, unless reasoning from analogies, leads us very far astray, was even greater than the painting of the Greeks. Wonderful as was the bloom of Italian art beneath the chisel, it was still more wonderful, and much more prolific, beneath the brush. Yet, strangely enough, the art of Italy made each of its onward steps under the guidance of the sculptor. The very first step of all was made by Niccola Pisano, and all along the later line we find his followers ever in advance of the painters of their time. Strangely enough, I say, but only to the superficial eye, — the eye which judges by ultimate results and not by their first causes. For the breath

of inspiration came in the beginning from the relics of antiquity, and as these relics were carved, not painted, it is but natural that their lesson should first have been learned by the sculptor, and by him transmitted to the painter.

Niccola Pisano is indeed the father of all Italian art. It is true that a distinct reaction followed upon his work and that his tendencies, his ideals, afterwards to become all-powerful, seemed to fade for a time in face of other tendencies, of ideals of another kind. He was a Classicist and his immediate successors were Gothicists. He cared most for beauty. They cared most for life and energy, for dramatic passion and emotional meaning. But though a knowledge of this fact is very necessary to our understanding of Italian sculpture, it is nevertheless a fact of secondary importance. The fact of prime importance is that Niccola burst the chrysalis of art; that he freed sculpture on the one hand from the trammels of Byzantine convention, and saved it on the other from the license of undirected effort. The main points are that he taught men both that they might see with their own eyes, and that they ought to choose

what things they would look at; and that the lesson was sympathetically received and fruitfully put in practice. It is but a secondary point, I repeat, that the master should have chosen to see the ancients, and his first followers should have chosen to see the body and soul of Christian man. History offers no more striking picture of an artist at once vitally influential and virtually isolated. Every chisel in Italy showed the effect of Niccola's work, and yet in its character that work stood by itself. A few men before him seem indeed to have aspired as he, but none had been able really to express their aspirations; and a few of his scholars tried to persist in his path, but their work is of almost no importance compared with the work of those who struck into another road, led by his own son Giovanni.

In his ideals and his tendencies Niccola was, in fact, before his time. The field was not yet ploughed for that classic seed which later should find such fruitful soil. For one thing, the age was still too Christian. A thoroughly Christian art of necessity cared most for story-telling, for dramatic expression, for the rendering of varied

personal emotions; it could care but very little for pure physical beauty, for the pure delighting of the eye. The great French Gothic school, for instance, cared vastly for expression, and vastly also for architectural beauty, but comparatively little for sculptural beauty as the Greeks, as Niccola, as the fifteenth-century Italians understood the term. The age was still too Christian, and it was also, on the other hand, still too much excited and unsettled by the new life that was throbbing in its veins, by the new views of man and the world, of the individual in his many-sided powers and possibilities, that were opening out before it. Until this new life had somewhat crystallized — until the veils and motes and beams of mediæval prejudice, the fetters of mediæval asceticism had been swept away, until the modern man had learned to understand himself a little better — the proper balance between truth and beauty, between expression and form, which art demands could not be achieved. And until the classic spirit in its general essence had been somewhat digested, the artist could not assimilate its qualities — he might try to copy the results of the antique, but he

could not translate its spirit into modern idioms of line and color. It was not strange that Giovanni Pisano and all his fellows of the fourteenth century should be dramatic in their treatment of their themes, naturalistic in their way of rendering Christian sentiment through moods and situations of intense emotion ; the marvel was that Niccola before them should have had so classic a love for beauty of form and for unemotional repose. It was inevitable that a reaction should come when he departed — inevitable and also most desirable. For had it been possible that a classicizing Renaissance should base itself immediately on the Italian art of the thirteenth century, with its scant knowledge of inferior ancient relics and its scanter technical ability, had it not been prefaced by a long period when nature was the teacher, it would have been something very different from the Renaissance that we know. With the teaching of nature alone Italian sculpture might never have risen even to the height attained by the northern Gothic school, for it would have had less help from architecture. But with the teaching of the antique alone it could never have been more than a most

imperfect copy of pagan art. The joining of both streams of influence was needed to make it what it was.

V.

It is interesting to see how both these streams of influence flow together through the centuries that divide Niccola Pisano from Michael Angelo, nay, from the latest of Venetians. Neither is ever wholly lost, though now one and now the other predominates in the work of an individual, now one and now the other in the work of an entire school or epoch. And it is as interesting to trace them back and find that each starts in the work of one of the Pisani. We cannot but compare the two, father and son, and mark their differences. We cannot but contrast the classic, passionless, sculpturesque beauty of Niccola's reliefs with the intense, energetic, expressive naturalism of Giovanni's. But we like still better to think of them together as "the great twin brethren" who were the forerunners, the prophets, the teachers, in very truth the fathers, of all that Italian art was ever to accomplish.

We must not forget that there was a direct special influence, which, in combina-

tion with the general spirit of the age, worked to turn Giovanni away from his father's path. This was the influence of the Gothic of the north, absorbed, perhaps, during a journey beyond the Alps, but more likely from certain German sculptors who, we know, worked in Italy when Giovanni was young. They were employed, for example, with many Italians, upon the façade of the Orvieto cathedral; and this building well marks the epoch, since it is the first in Tuscany where sculpture — figure-sculpture and architectural carving — plays at least an equal decorative rôle with color. The fourteenth century was the Gothic age of Italy, and the greater use of monumental sculpture was a natural consequence of northern influence. It is almost impossible to say how large was the part directly played by the Pisani in its development. As architects their influence was very great, and extended over the whole length and breadth of Italy; and had not Niccola been the first to show his countrymen what the chisel might accomplish?

The stream of classic influence seems weak throughout the fourteenth century, but we must not conceive of it as dry or

stagnant. The claims of pure sculptural beauty were never quite forgotten or denied. The time is perfectly expressed in Dante's writings. Dante, too, is chiefly Christian in sentiment, chiefly dramatic in treatment, but the growing importance of the human individual speaks from every page, and the place which he gives to Virgil in his scheme tells the strength of the classic influence very clearly. It was the classic influence transmitted from the Romans, greatly reinforced by Niccola, which made Italian sculptors always prefer the relief, until the later Renaissance time.[1] Through the classic influence they learned to use the relief in an infinitely more artistic way than any northern school; learned to recognize the demands of its field and adapt to it their most complicated groups; and learned to master all its different levels from the highest to the very lowest. Yet nevertheless all the great men of the fourteenth century seem chiefly Christian and naturalistic in their aims — Andrea and the

[1] And then, by the way, it was the influence of the newly discovered free statues of antiquity which turned them away from the models they had earlier found in Roman sarcophagi.

lesser so-called Pisani, Orcagna, Arnolfo del Cambio (greater as an architect than as a sculptor), Giotto, and the rest. The last name is the most important, not as being that of the greatest sculptor who followed Giovanni, — Andrea Pisano claiming this place, — but as being that of him by whom the new vital art passed over from the chisel to the brush.

With the incoming of the fifteenth century we note a change. The Gothic sculptors had studied their subject — humanity — from many sides; for sculptural beauty somewhat, for physical truth still more, but most of all for spiritual force. The early Renaissance sculptors persisted in all three of these efforts, but gave a more prominent place than before to sculptural beauty, a lesser place than before to spiritual force, and the most important place of all to physical truth. They are not only naturalistic but realistic in their aims.[1] A portrait-like rendering of the individual body seems to have attracted them beyond all else. Among the great fifteenth century

[1] This realistic tendency shows not merely in figure sculpture, but in all the ornament of early Renaissance architecture.

names — Ghiberti, Della Quercia, Donatello, Luca della Robbia, Verrocchio, Mino da Fiesole, Desiderio, Matteo Civitali, Benedetto da Majano (the list is endless) — Donatello's stands out as the most characteristic, the most typical; and Donatello was the greatest "realist" of all. But Italian art was so well-balanced and harmoniously rounded a development that we must not push too far the significance of defining epithets. It is easy and it is in a way correct to say, for instance, that Donatello is a realist, and, by comparison, Ghiberti an imaginative idealist. But in such a decision we really note not radical contrasts implying narrow, strictly-marked limitations, but delicate contrasts implying a slight preponderance of one quality over others which are just as truly present. It is better to say that each and all of the great fifteenth century artists are many-sided, that each and every one resumes within himself, in spite of his leaning a little to the one side or the other, what all resume together — the three-streamed tendency of the time toward a perfect art combining beauty, truth, and spiritual feeling. If Donatello were absent who would not

call Ghiberti a great realist? Looking only at such among Donatello's works as the "St. George," the "St. Cecilia," the "Annunciation," the "Triumph of Bacchus" in Florence, or the bronze patera in the South Kensington Museum, who would not call him a true disciple of antique art, a true classicist in his love for pure sculptural beauty? If we turn to the opposite extreme which shows in his art we find, I confess, some examples of positive ugliness, untinged by ideal feeling. But they seem very few even when his most realistic works are alone considered. And all contemporary artists show the same good taste and self-restraint, no matter how realistic may be their impulse. In portraiture itself, when the least beautiful of sitters has been rendered with a fidelity and force unapproached in any other age, a subtile charm has been diffused which makes the result most beautiful as art.[1] Thoroughly realistic as was the portrait-sculpture of Italy at this time, it was not crudely, baldly real-

[1] For suggestive criticism on the technique of Italian sculptors, I may point my readers to Mr. Pater's essay, and to an article by Mr. Kenyon Cox in the *Century Magazine* for November, 1884.

istic like so much Gothic art, like so much of the art of to-day. And for this virtue Italian sculptors were indebted to the uninterrupted persistence of the classic influence.

VI.

Yet, to return to our two great masters, it is nevertheless true that when the work of each is considered as a whole, realism predominates in that of Donatello, the love of beauty in that of Ghiberti. Luca della Robbia was not so great a man as either — not so powerful, not so versatile, not nearly so imaginative or profound; and, coming after them, he had learned from each that which each had developed for himself. All the same, he stands very high and his station is unique. It is unique just because with him we cannot say which tendency predominates — whether the love of individual truth or the love of beauty; just because when taken as a whole his work seems perfectly balanced between the two extremes. And there is even more to be said of him than this. These two great aims, great tendencies, had not yet extinguished in Italy the third that I have

named. There was still something desired in the way of artistic expression beyond the rendering of beauty and of personal idiosyncrasies; the artist still desired to voice a great general sentiment, and this sentiment still meant Christian feeling. But the desire was gradually fading; it is not very conspicuous even with Ghiberti or Donatello. With Luca, however, it is so conspicuous that we must rank it with his love of beauty and his love of physical truth, and say again that it is impossible to decide which shows most clearly in his perfectly balanced art. Not merely now and then like Donatello, not merely here and there and chiefly in his earlier work like Ghiberti, but always and everywhere Luca is distinctly, typically, a Christian sculptor. He is as Christian in his feeling as were the fourteenth-century Gothicists. But he expresses himself in a very different way. It is not only that his technical resources are perfect while theirs are imperfect; it is not only that he cares much more than they for beauty and for physical accuracy; his main ideal is quite different from theirs. He does not desire as they do to tell stories, to point morals, to be dramatic and emo-

tional, mystical and supersensual; he wishes simply to put the pure sentiment of Christianity, of faith and hope and gentle charity, into all his work. He does it perfectly, and yet that work is almost Greek in its beauty of form, almost Donatellesque in its simplicity. It seems to me that there is no Italian artist who equals him in this perfect combination of many qualities. One or two sculptors came after him who at times were exquisitely Christian too, and who possessed their art with equal mastery of hand. But there is much in the fact that they did come after him, and we cannot help seeing, moreover, that they lack something of his beautiful simplicity, his utter freedom from affectation, pose, self-consciousness. Compare, for instance, Matteo Civitali's well-known figure of "Faith" with one of Luca's figures, I care not which. You will feel, I am sure, the difference I have marked; and the very name of the "Faith" points the beginning of a change —a change in ideals and aims as great as that other which separates Luca from the dramatic, mystical Gothic age. His art is as frank and simple as it is real. He gives us madonnas, saints, and angels that are

realized as distinct human individualities; but sixteenth-century sculptors show us typified abstractions, impersonal allegoric idealizations, which soon give place to half-pagan nullities, as meaningless to the spectator as artificial to their creators.

Nor do I think that there is any one in painting who is exactly what Luca is in sculpture. The development of painting was so much slower that when the brush had become as skilful and free as was Luca's chisel, Christian feeling had all but disappeared, or preserved a merely official and unvital life. A comparison of dates is interesting and instructive. Ghiberti and Donatello were twenty years older than Luca, yet their art had reached technical perfection. But Luca's contemporaries of the brush were Paolo Ucello, Masaccio, Squarcione, and Giacomo the eldest of the Bellinis. Filippo Lippi was twelve, Benozzo Gozzoli was twenty, Giovanni Bellini was twenty-six, and Mantegna was thirty years his junior; and fifty years later than he were still born painters whom we call "early" — Botticelli, Lorenzo di Credi, Ghirlandajo, Signorelli, Francia, Carpaccio. Such dates tell strongly when we remem-

ber how quickly Christian feeling was fading before indifferentism or pagan sentiment. We may prefer these painters, perhaps, to those who came in or after Raphael's time. We may find a greater charm in the earlier work, and we cannot deny that even technically it is very noble. But technically it is not perfect. It does not show that entire freedom and completeness in the use of its resources which marks the apogee of a development. This freedom Ghiberti and Donatello and Luca did possess. If we consider the Renaissance movement as a whole, or if we consider it merely for its mood and temper, these sculptors belong to its earlier portion. But as sculpture their work is not "early;" it is technically complete. Their generation is the great typical generation of Renaissance sculpture; for the Sansovini and their fellows are already beginning the decline, are far less spontaneous, far less individual, far less Italian; they give at last an overweening importance to the classic influence, and I do not think that their technique can be called more admirable; and Michael Angelo is an abnormal, isolated giant, typical of nothing whatever but himself. Luca's gen-

eration is the typical generation of Italian sculpture; Raphael's and Titian's are the typical generations of Italian painting; and therefore it is not strange if in painting we find no such pure and powerful Christian sentiment as Luca's, expressed by a hand so entirely skilled as his.

VII.

I have tried to explain the essential quality of Luca della Robbia's art, and now must speak as briefly as possible of its technical character as shown in one or two representative examples.

More even than other sculptors of his time Luca preferred the relief to the statue in the round; but while they usually loved all its varieties with equal affection, he seems to have confined himself within narrower limits. We can imagine no kind of relief that was not brought to technical perfection early in the fifteenth century — none from the very highest to the very lowest.[1] For low-relief the Italian Renaissance

[1] "High-relief," I may explain, implies that certain portions of the figures are entirely freed from the ground, are in fact worked "in the round." When this is not the case, but when the most prominent portions are shown in more than half their thickness, then we speak of "middle-relief," and anything flatter than this is "low relief."

sculptors had a peculiar liking, and that extreme variety which is called *bassissimo-relievo* was an invention of their own. This variety has so slight a projection that the work hardly seems to be carved out of the material; it seems an efflorescence, nay, an exhalation from the surface; yet within its delicate salience all the necessary modelling is done with exquisite perfection. Neither Greek nor mediævalist had used this *bassissimo-relievo;* no one but the Assyrian had employed it in its pure form, uncombined with any more prominent passages, and unhelped (as was the low-relief of Egypt) by deeply incised outlines or a sunken field; and from Assyria had come, of course, no lesson to the Italians of the Renaissance. If we look at the cella-frieze of the Parthenon, we see middle-relief; if at its metopes, high-relief; and we find that in each case the chosen plane is used by itself and without admixture. But if we look at Italian reliefs, we find very often that more than one plane is used in a single composition. When we speak of the use of a single plane, be it understood, we do not mean that all the figures represented are of necessity given an equal degree of salience; but we

do mean that there is only a very small difference in their relative distances from our eye; that the background of stone or bronze is confessed as such; that no perspective effect is desired; in a word, that the group is conceived as a piece of sculpture, partly disengaged from the block, instead of wholly disengaged as in work executed in the round. By the use of more than one plane we mean, on the other hand, that some conspicuous degree of distance separates the nearest from the remoter figures; that all do not form a single group; that the material is nowhere left as a mere untouched background; that perspective effects are aimed at throughout; in a word, that the relief is conceived not as a true piece of sculpture, but as a more or less fully developed picture. Its figures decrease in size with their recession from the eye, as is the case on canvas; landscape or architectural details fill up the background and explain the composition; while for the ever-lessening intensity of color and sharpness of outline with which a painter completes his perspective illusion are substituted different planes of relief and different degrees of definiteness in modelling. This

is the system so largely employed by Renaissance sculptors, a system some tentative approach toward which had been made by the Assyrians and by the Romans, but which had never before been carried to its furthest limits. We hardly wonder that it tempted these fifteenth-century Italians, their love of realism was so strong, and their genius, as compared with the purely plastic genius of the Greeks, was so essentially pictorial. To see the utmost limits to which it might be pushed, we have only to look at Ghiberti's later and more famous Baptistery doors. We cannot even try to count and distinguish the planes of his relief, for they pass one into another by too many insensible gradations. We almost forget, indeed, that we are looking at sculptured work, so truly pictorial is the aim and the result. Yet almost in spite of himself, as it were, Ghiberti remains a great sculptor through it all — so great a sculptor that we can hardly bring ourselves to think that he overpassed the true limits of his art; so great that he tempts us to throw all theories to the wind and say: Let each artist be a law unto himself. But it is only artists as great as he who may permit themselves

such liberty, and then, superb though their own results may be, their example is sure to be pernicious: a truth which is just as applicable to Ghiberti as to Michael Angelo. When lesser men work after the pattern he had set, then we begin to note its faults. Then we begin to see how difficult it is, except for a Ghiberti, to realize any high artistic excellence when trying in sculpture for those qualities which are the province of the brush. Then we understand that only a great genius can preserve charm of line and modelling, clearness of meaning, balance, coherence, and harmony of parts, and unity of effect, while securing the charms of varied grouping and the illusions of perspective.

It must be counted as great praise for Luca della Robbia when I say that, strongly though he felt Ghiberti's influence in other ways, he was never tempted by his example beyond a truly sculpturesque treatment of his reliefs. I think I am right in believing that he never used more than one plane at once, and I know I am right in affirming as much of all his most characteristic and most famous works. He always had a plastic, not a pictorial, ideal in view,

and, moreover, almost always that sort of a plastic ideal which is peculiarly the ideal of the relief. I mean that he always reckoned upon the help of light and shadow for an important part of the beauty of his result. Strangely enough, Messrs. Molinier and Cavallucci speak throughout of his work as being in bas-relief. His chosen style was high-relief, and, so far as I have seen, he never used a really low variety.

The famous organ-tribune is in very high-relief, admirably managed for charm of line, for balance of parts, for clearness of form, for play of light and shadow, and for all the variety in composition which can possibly be wrought with the use of a single plane; and it is finished throughout with an exquisite nicety which yet does not injure breadth and unity of effect. Placed near the eye as its slabs now are in the Florentine Museum, and considered, so to say, intrinsically, their handling delights us much more than the bolder, sketchier treatment of Donatello's corresponding series. If they were all in their true position, in a darker place and well above our heads, it is probable that Donatello's would prove him to have been the wiser workman; but there

is no other comparison to be made between the two series which does not redound to Luca's credit. Their themes are quite alike: groups of children varying in age from infancy to adolescence, who are singing and playing on many instruments, and sometimes dancing to the sound. Donatello's are admirably faithful, vigorous, and spirited transcripts from nature, but they are little else. Luca's are just as faithful; his figures are just as simply childlike, just as spontaneous in movement, just as diversely individual; but the realism is more reticent in expression, and is joined to great plastic beauty and to a strong, genuine, and appropriate sentiment. There is small token in Donatello's children that they are making sacred music, but no one can look at Luca's and mistake the fact. Devotional feeling is clearly expressed throughout, though varied with exquisite subtilty in accordance with the age, the occupation, and the individuality of each little figure. Its highest expression is in the group of older boys who are singing, quietly absorbed in their task, as they look over each other's shoulders at their book. But it is not lacking even in those groups which are in strongest contrast

with this — those where little children are dancing in a joyful, almost thoughtless mood.

The first-named group shows, perhaps, some slight lingering trace of the Gothic manner of the preceding century. It is a little monotonous, although very noble in line, and the delightfully naïve realism of its faces is gained by some slight sacrifice of beauty. But in many of the other groups we find the purest beauty: a truly classic freedom and grace of movement, and a truly classic charm of physical type. Great is the difference, I think, between them and the reliefs of Donatello, which, despite their freshness, truth, and charm do not show us complete purity of line, perfection of form, or a finely-balanced harmony in composition. In Luca's there are many passages which no Greek need have disavowed.

Of course we must remember that we are judging Luca by his best work and Donatello by a work which is far from his best — which could not have been his best since its theme was not in accord with the most strongly marked side of his talent. And yet something of what we must say in com-

paring these special works, we may say in comparing the two sculptors in all their works. It is true that Luca falls far behind Donatello in many ways; but it is also true that he is more sure to delight us with pure plastic beauty, and much more certain to move us with a clear spiritual meaning.

Luca's bronze door to the Sacristy of the Florentine cathedral is undoubtedly one of his finest works; yet it is, I think, one of the least well-known, possibly because it has been somewhat overshadowed by the greater size and prominence of those Baptistery doors near by which were wrought by Andrea Pisano and Ghiberti. When I say that each of its ten panels shows a single seated figure with an angel on either hand, I say, of course, that the whole reveals far less of inventiveness, of bold imagination, than Ghiberti's and Pisano's portals; but the quiet harmony, the essential unity thus secured are not qualities to be despised; and when we examine the different panels and see the real unlikeness that underlies their similarity, we perceive that, though very reticent, artistic imagination is by no means lacking. Nothing

could surpass the delicate, all but excessive care with which the reliefs themselves and the heads in the medallions of the border are carried out; Luca's training with a goldsmith here shows very plainly. Yet even among Renaissance reliefs few equal his in their harmony of line, in their truly sculpturesque conception, in their dignity and serenity; and still fewer in their depth of Christian sentiment. No one who studies this door will again call Luca a merely graceful, amiable, charming artist; no one will deny him a high place among those sculptors whom we recognize as lofty, noble, great.

When he turns from bronze and marble to enamelled clay, Luca's sentiment and his strong plastic instinct remain the same, but we must no longer look for so acute a realism or so refined a technical language. Everything had to be broadened and simplified in view of the necessities of the new material — of that covering enamel which, supple though it was, could permit no such sharp precision of line, no such subtile delicacy of modelling, as could bronze or marble. And therefore I said that from one point of view it seems a pity he should

have discovered his new process. Beautiful as is such a work, for instance, as the tympanum of the church-door at Urbino, with its half-lengths of the Madonna and four adoring monks, and its full-length of the Child who stands before his mother on the frame of the relief, it would have been still more beautiful had marble been the medium; and the color, which adds such a value from the decorative or architectural standpoint, adds nothing, it seems to me, from the purely plastic.

I think I was justified in saying above that Luca always and everywhere renders a distinctly Christian sentiment in a distinctly legible way; for the instances are so few as to be very unimportant where he falls into a merely gracious realism. A realism which is hardly even gracious marks, indeed, his five reliefs on the Florentine Campanile; but in these Luca worked either from the actual designs of his forerunners in the task, or under constraint to make his results match in theme and character with theirs. Again, there is, perhaps, one of his Madonnas — that in the tympanum of the Via del Agnolo in Florence — which, by contrast with his typical

examples, we may call nothing more than a beautiful human mother. But I know of no other exceptions; for the only portrait-statue which he has left us (on the tomb of the Bishop of Fiesole), while it is an admirably clear and personal transcript — no likeness of the time could well be otherwise — is yet imbued with the artist's own characteristic sentiment. Compare it with contemporary sepulchral figures, and we shall not call it, as we do most others, a piece of merely faithful or merely artistic likeness-making. It is very faithful, and consummately artistic, yet full of religious feeling too. It is a piece of truly Christian idealism.

VIII.

At the time of Luca's death, his nephew Andrea had already long been famous; but his activity was to last much longer still, and was to result in an infinitude of works among which it is not always possible to distinguish those that were his own from those that were due to sons and scholars laboring with him in one of the great busy ateliers so characteristic of the age. His legacy in other materials than enamelled

clay is so small that it need not detain us here; much more rightly than his uncle he may be identified with the new process. Technically he seems to have made no effort to develop its possibilities; he was satisfied with blue and white for his main effects, employing only in minor details and in his borders that fuller polychromy of which later so wide a use was made. But he adapted the art to an everlengthening list of objects, and made it indeed a helpful handmaid to the architect. Luca modelled reliefs for tombs and tabernacles; tympana, rosettes, medallions, and tiles for wall and ceiling; and at least once a pair of figures in the round. But from Andrea's atelier came not only all of these in abundance, but whole tabernacles, great pictorial *rétables*, vases, candelabra, friezes, pulpits, fonts, and fountains. His work is also more ambitious in its use of many figures and of much diversity in action and arrangement; but he is an inferior artist to Luca, and not only because he worked from Luca's inspiration rather than from his own.

To begin with he is much less strong. The original ideal still persists, the original

sentiment is still preserved, but with a less elevated accent on the one hand, and on the other a less forceful realism. Sometimes, indeed, we have no fault to find. Sometimes, when the theme is simply tender, it is hard to see much difference between Luca's art and his; but very often — and more and more as the years passed on — Luca's delicate feeling got a touch of sentimentality; his grace of line lost a little of its nobility; his simplicity became almost self-conscious. The early sweetness remained; much of the early force and frankness had evaporated. And so we care most for those among Andrea's works where strength was least required. He has left us nothing better, I should say, than his many simple figures of the Madonna with her child, or than the famous medallions on the outside of the Hospital of the Innocents in Florence — those dozen delicious babes in swaddling clothes, each so perfect in beauty and truth, yet each with a distinct little individuality of his own, quite different from that of his tiny brothers. Yet, after all, such art as this, naïve and delightful though it be, is not art of the height and meaning that Luca produced when he carved the children of his organ gallery.

Andrea's art, again, became more decorative, less purely sculptural, through the greater prominence he gave to the bordering of his reliefs. Luca's are commonly set in a very simple frame composed of delicately-designed mouldings, the classic style of which strikingly proclaims the death of mediæval art. He occasionally added a second border, as, for example, of foliage; but Andrea increased the frequency and the importance of this, modelling it in very high relief and in very realistic forms of growing plants or garlanded fruits and flowers. When such a border is made so conspicuous as somewhat to overshadow the relief itself, or when it is used without any architectural motives at all and by itself builds the frame, then we recognize, I think, a decline in taste. In necessarily architectural examples, however, — as in his great altar-pieces, — Andrea's framework is often most charmingly proportioned and designed. But here too certain elements occur at times which, while they aid the richness, detract from the purity of the result. For example, he often adorns his architecture with rows of detached cherub-heads, intrinsically delightful but architecturally rather out of place.

From all of this it may be understood why the beautiful reredos at the Metropolitan Museum[1] in New York should be attributed to Andrea, not to Luca della Robbia. Neither historical nor critical evidence can assign a similar work to the ear-

[1] Quoting Dr. Oscar Berggruen of Vienna, MM. Molinier and Cavallucci describe the Metropolitan Museum reredos in the following terms: "Large *rétable*. 'The Assumption.' In the centre the Virgin, seated on clouds, her hands joined, rises to heaven amid a glory of cherubim, while to the right and left float four groups of angels sounding on trumpets. Below is the sarcophagus of the Virgin ornamented with rosettes and filled with flowers. On the left, stand in ecstasy St. Augustine and St. Francis; on the right, St. Bernard of Sienna, and another monkish saint. Two pilasters, decorated with graceful candelabra, support a frieze ornamented with seven heads of cherubim. The tympanum, in the shape of a depressed arch, contains two floating angels bearing a crown. Figures enamelled in white on a blue ground, which is of a lighter tint in the *mandorla* around the Virgin. The style of this beautiful *rétable* recalls the 'Coronation of the Virgin' in the Osservanza Convent at Sienna; the bas-reliefs at La Verna (especially the 'Madonna of the Girdle'); and the 'Coronation of the Virgin' in the Academy of the Fine Arts at Genoa. With every probability, therefore, one may attribute it to Andrea della Robbia. It comes from Piombino where it adorned the main altar of the church. It was taken to Florence in 1830, and purchased a few years ago by an American, who generously presented it to the New York Museum."

lier master. But there are many *rétables* which are known to be Andrea's, and among them two or three with the strongest likeness to our own. Every characteristic speaks for Andrea — the nature of the work itself, the design of the architectural setting in which cherub-heads are introduced, the many figures and diversified action, and the slight lack of strength in expression and form that appears when we compare it with Luca's work. But it is a very fine, pure, and characteristic example of Andrea's art — that is to say, of the Della Robbia school when it was in its fullest development, and ere the period of its real decline had begun. There is no possible reason why we should attribute it to a later hand than Andrea's; but there is every reason — if criticism in art means anything at all — why we should not attribute it to Luca's. Judging from a photograph MM. Molinier and Cavallucci call it a "precious" possession. Such it is in truth. It would be a treasure to any European museum; but for this reason there is all the less need to claim for it any interest or value not properly its own.

IX.

One more word about Andrea della Robbia ere we pass to his sons and successors.

Andrea further innovated upon Luca's practice by using at times more than one plane in his reliefs. When this is very discreetly done, as when in some of his smaller works he puts the Virgin and Child in high relief in the foreground, and a group of angels in lower relief above — that is to say, when there is no attempt at illusory, material perspective, but merely what we may call a sort of imaginative, ideal perspective — then indeed the art is pure and the result enchanting. But occasionally he essays the utmost pictorial diversity, as in a reredos representing the "Nativity" which is now at South Kensington. Such efforts were far less justifiable in his glazed clay than they were in Ghiberti's bronze which could be much more delicately wrought; and the help he had from polychromy and from details that were merely painted without modelling did not suffice to win his battle.

Portraiture in enamelled clay he seems to have rarely attempted. When he de-

sired its effect, he wisely left at least his faces uncolored and unglazed; and then he showed himself possessed of his full share of the current gift for realistic yet artistic likeness-making. Nothing could be more living, more full of character, than the heads in the "Meeting of St. Francis and St. Domenic" in the tympanum of the loggia of St. Paul's Hospital in Florence; and the work has also a tender beauty of sentiment and a noble simplicity of line which faithfully echo Luca's mood.

It is not wonderful that the works attributed to Andrea della Robbia should be so numerous, or that their actual authorship should so often be in doubt; for he lived to be ninety years old (dying in 1524), and had five sons, as well as numerous other followers, working in his studio. Of these five sons two became monks under the preaching of Savonarola, but did not quite abandon the practice of their craft. Another, named Luca, journeyed to Rome and is known to have laid in the Vatican many enamelled pavements of which but the scantiest traces now exist. Among them was the flooring of the Loggie, executed under Raphael's direction and after

designs from his hand or his scholars'. But these pavements, and certain vases and other objects which are believed to be Luca's, are merely painted, not modelled in relief, and so he may with justice be called a potter rather than a sculptor like his brethren.

Girolamo della Robbia's name is chiefly identified with his work in Paris, whither we shall follow him in a moment. But the greatest sculptor among Andrea's five sons was Giovanni — the greatest and most famous, though he died but four years later than his father, at the age of sixty which may be counted young for one of these patriarchal Della Robbias. Many of his works are signed, an innovation which doubtless proves that the enamelling process was no longer a family secret. The time was past when a Della Robbia needed no certificate of authenticity.

MM. Molinier and Cavallucci believe that they can trace a gradual but radical change of style in Giovanni's work. In the first period of his life he was entirely under his father's influence, — that is, under the transmitted influence of Luca. Nothing, therefore, need be said of his earlier produc-

tions, for which a beautiful fountain in the sacristy of the Florentine Cathedral may serve as a type. As we might expect, it is often attributed to Andrea and even to Luca himself.

But in his second period Giovanni breaks with those Della Robbia traditions of plastic simplicity and sweet Christian sentiment which had already persisted so marvellously long, embalmed, as it were, in the family process. The work of this period varies much, Giovanni's desire for independent expression leading him now to success and again to failure. Great haste is sometimes evident, as, for example, in the admixture of merely painted motives with those that are enamelled. Often the conception is cold and constrained, and the full polychromy that characterizes Giovanni's later period adds a touch of confusion instead of clearness.

As a striking example of this period I may note a great polychrome tabernacle which stands in the Via Nazionale in Florence, almost concealed by barriers of wire netting and grimy glass. The central relief shows a Madonna and Child, with saints on either hand, and above, angels bearing a

crown; but this relief is no longer of paramount importance; it is almost crushed by the elaborateness of the borders. The inner border contains, at the bottom, life-size figures which are neither quite combined with the middle group nor entirely disassociated from it; above these it shows half-lengths of angels, and the God-Father bends from the crown of the arch. Outside is a second border with statuettes and floral motives and heads of ecclesiastics in the most prominent possible relief. The whole effect, florid and overladen, cannot be called successful, whether we judge it from a strictly sculptural or from a decorative point of view. There is no clearness, no unity in the conception, and but little artistic feeling in the execution or in the application of the color; and incoherence is increased by the suppression of architectural factors. We realize the errors of its treatment when we compare this tabernacle on the one hand with those where Andrea della Robbia sets a well-composed relief in a purely architectural framework, or on the other hand with those of Gothic origin, which are nearly akin to it in scheme yet in the borders of which the artist always

supports and unites his figures by the help of architectural motives.

But Giovanni gradually worked himself free from his period of embarrassment and confusion, and finally showed himself an artist consummately clear in conception and definite in aim, though an artist of a very different stamp from the earlier Della Robbias. That is, we may affirm as much if he really was the author of the famous frieze on the Ceppo Hospital at Pistoja. No documents exist which directly confirm or deny the fact. All we can say is that popular tradition assigns the work to the Della Robbias, and that Giovanni was certainly in Pistoja in the year 1525, while the foundations of the hospital were laid in 1519, and the date 1525 occurs on one of the spandrel medallions and again on the corner of the building itself. Lübke and many other writers speak of Andrea as its maker, — a manifest impossibility when we collate our dates. Others deny it to be the work of any Della Robbia. It seems impossible, however, that so vast an undertaking should have been so successfully carried out elsewhere than in the atelier of our great dynasty of enamellers. Nor does

it seem as though Giovanni could at just this time have been in Pistoja for any other purpose. MM. Molinier and Cavallucci, after careful research, deem Giovanni's authorship all but certain, granting, of course, that he must have been largely helped in the matter of execution.

The front of the hospital consists of a deep recessed loggia or porch, scarcely raised above the level of the street and enclosed by a row of slender columns supporting wide round arches, in each spandrel being set a large circular enamelled medallion. Above these, along the whole façade, runs a frieze of almost life-size figures. This is divided into six compartments by pairs of pilasters, very slight in projection, between each pair standing a single figure in high relief, emblematic of one of the cardinal virtues. These figures are idealistically treated, and though we may find in them some slight touch of self-consciousness, yet they have much dignity and feeling, showing once again, I think, the perennial influence of Luca. It is not in them, however, nor in the spandrel medallions — which are evidently scholars' work and good only in their borders of heavy fruit and foliage —

but in the six reliefs of the frieze itself, that our interest centres; and here there is indeed no trace of Luca, unless we see it in the strict adherence to a single plane of relief. Luca's grace of line, his feeling for "style" in composition, his idealism in sentiment — all these have disappeared in favor of the most direct and simple realism. If we look for pure plastic beauty we shall find it only in one or two isolated figures. But if we look for an unflinching portrayal of individual truths, then indeed we have come to the right place. The theme is the "Seven Acts of Mercy," personified by the ministrations of ecclesiastics to the sick and needy, a subject in which realism certainly had a sympathetic field prepared for it. The simple, unadorned truthfulness of its expression can hardly be described, and the diverse and marvellously expressive figures strike one as being the directest portraiture. The realistic effect is heightened, moreover, by the use of full polychromy in all portions save those which represent flesh, and just as much by the fact that such portions are left in that unglazed clay which comes very near to the hue of nature and permits a very complete and incisive kind of execu-

tion. It is, indeed, a wonderful piece of work, not alone or chiefly in the triumphant use of the difficult material, but still more in the way an unadulterated, almost homely, realism in conception has been joined to a purely sculpturesque way of treating the oft-misunderstood and much-abused relief.

When we consider all these qualities; when we remember too that no decorative accessories are introduced to assist the effect of the figures, but that the dividing pilasters are extremely simple and the mouldings at top and bottom so severe as to be actually bald; and when we think of Giovanni della Robbia's other works, we do not marvel that his authorship of this has seemed to many critics doubtful. Nor does later work of his exist to help us read the riddle; he must have died before this one was complete.

MM. Molinier and Cavallucci say that the implied total revolution in his art was a thing to be expected. They think it an inevitable result of the influences of his time. But such an opinion hardly seems borne out by history. It is true that the spirit which Luca personified was quite extinct, and that

some radical change of aim and manner might long since have been looked for in his descendants. It is likewise true that through the whole fifteenth century Donatello had more followers than Ghiberti, and that the general trend of art was towards realism. But this period too had passed away. One contemporary of Giovanni della Robbia's was, indeed, Mazzano, who carried an exaggerated realism to its utmost possible extreme — very far outside the limits of good art. But another contemporary was Andrea Sansovino; and he — not by any means such an eccentric as Mazzano — really typifies the spirit of Italian art in the first quarter of the sixteenth century. As we read this spirit in Andrea Sansovino's works and in those of the majority of his fellow sculptors, it seems the reverse of realistic. His work is distinctly ideal although in a very different way from Ghiberti's. Ghiberti merely drew inspiration from the antique love of beauty; but now we find a deliberate revival of the antique in aim and manner — a return with enormously increased knowledge and skill to the stand-point of Niccola Pisano three centuries before. With Andrea Sansovino

the antique forms of sculpture were more perfectly resuscitated than they have ever been at an earlier or a later day, while the decline into servile imitation had not yet begun.[1]

It is hard indeed in such a period to find an influence which could have led to the making of the Pistoja frieze. It stands as far as the poles from Andrea Sansovino's art and from Cellini's; nor has it the least kinship with Mazzano's. The pilaster figures show a strong classic influence and their allegorical intent seems almost ahead of the time. But these figures are unconnected with the panels themselves and utterly unlike them; and, on the other hand, the realism of the panels is admirably artistic while Mazzano's realism is brutally theatric. It is purely natural, almost naïve, yet self-restrained, while Mazzano's is vulgar, affected, and offensive, — an attempt to outvie nature in its most exaggerated moods.

In Giovanni della Robbia's middle period we can trace an impulse to throw off the

[1] This decline is marked by the substitution of alien classic for national and Christian subject-matter; it begins with Cellini and Jacopo, the younger Sansovino; it continues in John of Bologna, and ends in the heavy and affected nullities of Bernini.

family character and become an idealist of the new classicizing type. Such an impulse shows, for instance, in the large saints' figures of Santa Maria at Ripa, and in certain medallions which are now in Florence and at South Kensington. So it is all the more surprising if, in his latest years, he turned about once more and became so downright a realist as the artist of Pistoja. Yet the character of the frieze would seem just as exceptional did we credit it to another hand; and the skill of its execution would in such a case be an added marvel. To no other man whose name is remembered can it be assigned with so much probability; and it seems impossible that it should have been the work of a sculptor otherwise unknown.

X.

Long before as well as after Giovanni della Robbia's death, the art of enamelling terra-cotta statuary was very widespread in Italy. It was so widespread and so diverse in its manifestations that we cannot criticise more definitely than by saying, This is a good work and this is a bad one. Who may have been the author of the one or of

the other can scarcely ever be ascertained, though we are naturally inclined to give the best to the Della Robbia studio. Those works in unbroken white which are so often called Luca's really belong almost altogether to this latest time; and now the practice became common of copying former works or of reproducing them by means of casts, — a practice very alien to the spirit of those good old days when each of Luca's and of Andrea's works was a fresh creation. Now, too, enamellers began to copy the bronze or marble works of other sculptors, and even to imitate in their reliefs scenes which the painter had made beautiful on canvas; and, as we know positively in one or two cases and may assume in very many more, other sculptors now modelled their clay and sent it to the Della Robbias to be colored with enamel. Is it wonderful that we have no longer a clue to guide us in our nomenclature, or that what was once so pure and beautiful an art should have declined into a mere prolific trade — sometimes into a process which degrades the name of a respectable handicraft?

After Giovanni della Robbia's death, the only real point of interest is to be found

in France. Thither, about 1527, went the brother Girolamo of whom I have already spoken, better known by the French version of his name, Jerome. He too, like so many other Italians before and after, — like Leonardo, Andrea del Sarto, Cellini, Rosso, and Primaticcio, — was tempted away from the distracted peninsula by the peace and the munificent royal patronage of Paris. Indeed, it seems probable that he was directly invited by Francis I., as immediately upon his arrival an important work was committed to his hands. This was nothing less than the construction and adornment of the famous Château du Bois de Boulogne, commonly and most mysteriously called *le Château de Madrid*.[1] It was one of the wonders of its age, but to us, alas, heirs of the Reign of Terror, is only known by tradition and by Du Cerceau's drawings.

[1] It seems as though, of all places in the world, Madrid must have been the last, except Pavia, which Francis I. would desire to remember or to honor. And indeed the name stands always "Château de Boulogne" in his official documents. Yet "Madrid" soon became the common appellation, as we see from Du Cerceau's drawings. Some writers believe it must have been given on account of a supposed resemblance between Della Robbia's decoration and the *azuleios* or colored enamelled tiles that were characteristic of certain parts of Spain.

Nothing of the sort had been built before, and nothing of the sort has been built again.

The north façade was twenty-four metres in length, and was broken into three divisions, which were separated from each other and flanked at the corners of the building by narrow, projecting pavilions. These were quite plain save for small square windows and the string-courses which bound the whole structure together. The richness of the main portions was thus brought into full relief, and very rich they look to be. Their two lower stories show arcades with round arches, and above are two more stories where the rectangular windows are framed, apparently, by pilasters and elaborate mouldings.

Every one knows the splendid skill shown by French Renaissance architects, ere the advent of François Mansart with his innovations, in designing their great groups of high, pointed roofs and lofty chimneys. They proved themselves the masters of the world in the art of roofing secular constructions, and it is therefore no slight praise to say that even for its own generation the roofing of "Madrid" seems peculiarly fine. It is impossible to know how much credit

for the strictly architectural part of the work should be given to Jerome della Robbia, and how much to the obscure "master-mason," Pierre Godier, whose name is associated with his in the commission. Nor is it easy to decide how much enamelled terra-cotta was used in the decoration, Du Cerceau's text helping but little to elucidate his prints. He leads us to believe that the fine interior features, the pilasters and great chimney-pieces which he drew, were in terra-cotta; and of the façade he says: "The largest part of the enrichment of the first and second stories outside is of terra-cotta. The mass is very brilliant (*esclatante*) to the eye . . . all the more that even the chimneys and dormers are filled with work." But this last phrase does not mean terra-cotta work. Jerome was not allowed to finish "Madrid" in peace. His name disappeared from the records in 1553, and according to Vasari, he then returned to Florence. His brother Luca, the potter, whom he had called from Rome to help him, had already, it would seem, ended his life in Paris. At the death of Francis I., in fact, Philibert Delorme had been made *Surintendent des Bâtiments*, and his book[1]

[1] *Treatise on Architecture.*

tells us of his disapproval of the decorative system adopted for "Madrid," and of the care he took not to continue it in the upper stories. In 1559 Primaticcio succeeded Delorme, and called in to aid him at "Madrid" the Limoges enameller Pierre Courtois. We know that at least the decorations of the chimneys were executed by Courtois in his own material, and some remains of them are still to be seen at the Hôtel Cluny — great colored figures on a blue background, enamelled on copper and curiously hammered up from the back so that they stand out in considerable relief. This last fact tends to prove that Courtois strove to bring his own enamels into harmony with the terra-cottas which Jerome della Robbia had placed below. In 1560 Jerome returned once more to Paris, and when he died, six years later, the Château stood entire; but we do not know what part he may have taken in its completion. It is only certain that he stood well at court, receiving commissions of other kinds and lodging in one of the royal palaces.

Returning now to the Château, we find that the spandrels of the arcades were filled by circular medallions, and that elaborate

friezes ran above them, richer in the first story than in the second. The medallions were undoubtedly of terra-cotta, but about the other details there is more question. Vasari tells us that Jerome worked in stone for the decoration of the building, but from the way in which contemporary and later writers (always speaking casually, alas! and never descriptively) dwell upon the effect of the enamelled color, it seems as though it could not have been confined to the medallions. Nothing exists to-day which with any likelihood can be considered a part of Jerome's work upon the Château except four medallions colored in white and dull red now in the Cluny Museum, and a few others, colored in white and violet, which are in the collection at Sèvres. These alone seem to have survived when, a hundred years ago, the paviors of Paris, for the mending of their roads, bought the heaps of terra-cotta which lay around the shattered palace.

The other commissions which Jerome received during his second stay in Paris included terra-cotta decorations for the palace at Fontainebleau, which have long since perished; two marble figures, lost again, for

the monument which was to hold the heart of Francis II. at Orleans; and a figure for the mausoleum which Catherine de Medici had planned for Henry II. The queen desired that even during her lifetime her recumbent effigy should be placed beside her husband's on the tomb. The general design of the monument was Primaticcio's, and the execution was distributed among a number of sculptors, to Jerome della Robbia's share falling Catherine's figure. It is certain that he received for it a payment on account, but eventually both the recumbent statues were executed by Germain Pilon, doubtless because Jerome died before his had been completed. A partly finished marble figure of the dead Catherine still exists which in former years received different appellations, and was often supposed to be Pilon's first essay for his work. But to-day it is generally conceded that it is the figure which Jerome della Robbia seems to have left unfinished at his demise. Those among my readers to whom the Museum of the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts* in Paris is a familiar memory, will doubtless recollect the strange, ghastly, realistic-looking nude figure which is an imaginative picture of Catherine as a

corpse, designed many years before she left the world. It is interesting in itself, and doubly interesting as being the last work of the last artist of "the great dynasty of the Della Robbias."

But, I may add, the Della Robbia family by no means died out with the death of its art. Jerome's many children all married well in France, and his descendants find occasional mention in history. One of his daughters became the wife of Ascanio di Mari, goldsmith to the king, who was recognized even by the irascible Cellini as the best among his pupils. In Italy also honors were in store for the Della Robbias. A certain Luigi, for example, a descendant in the fourth generation of Andrea's brother Simone, was the father of three bishops, and his sister married into the noble family of the Viviani. One of her descendants of to-day has shown himself an intelligent admirer of his forefathers' art, and all are proud to recognize their origin by calling themselves the Marchese Viviani della Robbia.

II.

CORREGGIO.

1494–1534.

A GREAT deal has been written about Correggio yet one important fact with regard to him has seldom been remarked. This is the fact that he was singularly separated alike from the stirring life of his time and from the artistic currents which ran through it. He is almost the only great artist of whom history tells who stood aloof from all the "schools" of his day, and was neither swayed by the example nor spurred by the rivalry of fellow-craftsmen. Such isolation would seem strange in any age joined to so complete and uneccentric a development; but when we think where Correggio stood as to time and place, — in the centre of Lombardy in the height of the Renaissance, — it seems a phenomenon indeed.

I.

Born in 1494 and dying in 1534, Correggio's life just spans the time when the great wave we call the Renaissance was at its fullest height, pausing, crested with a marvellous foam of beauty, between its slow upheaval and its quicker dissolution. His birth almost marks the finding of America when a new world was thrown open; his death, the sack of Rome when the centre of the old world was shattered, never, in spite of piecing and patching and the outward semblance of renewal, to regain the vitality or the prestige it had lost. Lorenzo de Medici, who had trained the flowers of art to their most sumptuous unfolding, died in 1492; and Clement VII., who saw them blasted and half killed, fled to St. Angelo in 1527. Between Lorenzo and Clement lay the pontificates of Julius and of Leo which marked the high-water limits of princely patronage, popular comprehension, and inspired production. Correggio's years come in contact with those of almost all the great painters of this greatest time, and run quite parallel with some. When he was born Mantegna was near the close of his

career; Titian and Giorgione were in the bloom of youth; Leonardo da Vinci was in his prime; Dürer was beginning his work at the north; Raphael was in Perugino's workshop, Michael Angelo in Ghirlandajo's; and Holbein's birth, like Giulio Romano's, fell within a few years of his own. By the time he had closed his forty years of life Mantegna had long been dead, Giorgione had followed, and also Dürer, Leonardo, and Raphael. Michael Angelo and Titian were left alone, in their gray hairs, amid the graves of their generation; and only in Venice, with Veronese and Tintoretto, did the coming men show signs of equalling the old.

Never, except in the Athens of Pericles, has the *Zeitgeist* — the spirit of the age — worked so forcibly in æsthetic things as in this Italy of the High or Middle Renaissance. In previous generations each man's influence had been more distinct. Each great mind from Gerbert, the first true scholar of the modern world, down through the wakening centuries to the Pisani who marked the dawn, and to Petrarch who saw the sunrise of the new day; then from Petrarch down through the artists, humanists, and patron-

princes of the early Renaissance, down past Alberti and past Cosmo to Lorenzo's day, — each great mind had worked to a large extent in independence of the others. Each had contributed a separate and very individual share towards the forming of a *Zeitgeist* which now was all pervading. The mood of art was now homogeneous in this full-grown modern world — in the Florence of Lorenzo, in the Rome of Leo, in the Urbino of Federigo, in the Milan of Ludovico il Moro, in the countless little cities with each its local Mæcenas, its local meed of fame, its local school and style and flavor. In spite of all these subordinate diversities there was but one Art for Italy. Each great man's work expressed universal rather than personal ideas and feelings, typified the spirit of the age more even than the soul of its creator. I do not imply, of course, a uniformity like that of Egypt, where all voices sing at the same pitch in one vast national chorus. Each Italian has his own peculiar sweetness, strength, or rarity of tone; each makes this distinctly heard, yet all unite in a general harmony which breathes of the nation and the time. The ceaseless voyaging of artists as well

as humanists, their endless correspondence, their desire to know all that was to be known from Antwerp to Naples, the flux of students from studio to studio, of masters from court to court, the ramifications and relationships of the greater and the lesser schools — all these go to prove how great, in spite of the wonderful personality of each worker, was his indebtedness to his fellow-workers, how much he owed to the spirit of the age.

It was just the time when a scantily influenced career in art might seem most impossible. Was not even Dürer drawn to Venice and Bologna as well as northward to the Netherlands? How could an Italian, born close to the greatest schools and patrons, at a time when restlessness was the rule and incessant change the most constant factor in all productive lives — how could an Italian stay quietly on one side and beat his music out by and for himself? Yet this is what Correggio did. He was isolated, self-developed, self-sufficient in the height and centre of the Italian Renaissance. No one seems to have felt more powerfully than he the spirit of the age. Never was one important side of it more clearly expressed

than by his brush. Yet it seems to have been absorbed from the heavy laden air, not drunk through definite contact. Day by day in his seclusion he must have heard more plainly the applause that the world was giving to other men of genius; but he did not even touch the hem of their garments afar off — much less lay hold of them for instruction or for combat.

Not only history but lack of history gives proof of Correggio's isolation. The scantiness of his biographers' statements is as convincing as their disputed truth. He was all but unknown to his contemporaries. Ariosto does not mention him when, in the "Orlando Furioso," he names the painters of the day. A delightful legend tells of a visit paid by Titian to Parma when the monks who exhibited Correggio's frescoes slighted them as poor things which they were about to have replaced, and of Titian's superb reply: "Have a care what you do; if I were not Titian I should wish to be Allegri." Alas for so pretty a tale! — we cannot believe that Titian ever saw a fresco of Correggio's. But it is a significant tale none the less, proving the slight renown which the myth-makers of a

little later day believed that Correggio had gained while living. Raphael and Michael Angelo doubtless never heard his name; and though critics anxious to find some influence strong enough to explain his perfect skill have argued that he may have gone to Milan, that he may have seen Leonardo's pictures, and may have visited Bologna, studied Francia, and cried "*Anch' io sono pittore!*" in face of Raphael's "St. Cecilia," yet all these facts are definitely denied by the more thorough investigations of to-day.

It would be tedious to detail how gradually Correggio's reputation spread. In that age of quick success to effort and instant fame for all success, his art remained so long unknown that when it was discovered the memory of his personality had quite decayed. Lodovico Dolce gave him barren mention. Aretino in 1557 ranked him among the "good painters" somewhere below Giulio Romano. Vasari's book is almost devoid of facts and more than usually unreliable. Annibale Caracci is the first who appreciates him; and he says that in Parma itself nothing could be gleaned about him even a few years after

his death; he seemed to have been at once forgotten, or, rather, never to have been remarked. Italian commentaries and discussions have been numerous in the present century but more for confusion than enlightenment. Resuming and sifting them all, however, and including in the process the criticisms of Raphael Mengs as well, we have an excellent German biography written by Julius Meyer.[1] From this sufficient data can be gathered for an outline of Correggio's life.

II.

Antonio Allegri was born at the little village of Correggio, near Modena, from which he takes his artist-name. His parents were burghers in decent circumstances. The town was the seat of a miniature court, and, like all its neighbors, boasted local talent and patronized art in a tiny way. It is nevertheless uncertain from whom Antonio got his first lessons; probably it was from an uncle whom tradition represents as the worst of bunglers. In his boyhood he went to Modena and learned of painters there. The chief among them was

[1] *Correggio.* Leipzig, 1871.

Bianchi Ferrari, or Frari, a scholar of Francia's, imbued with traditions of Urbino and its school. He died when his pupil was sixteen. Before his scanty schooling was complete Antonio went to Mantua also, where Mantegna had been the head and front of the Lombard school. His influence is easily read in Correggio's early work, especially in the "St. Francis" of the Dresden gallery. This was his first important picture, painted at seventeen; and it was modelled, evidently, upon Mantegna's "Vierge de la Victoire" now in the Louvre. Yet the influence was not personal, for the great Lombard had died when Correggio was only twelve years old;[1] from his pictures or his scholars, not from himself, the boy must have learned his marvellous perspective and his fashion of foreshortening from the point of view of the spectator.

Leonardo's influence seems almost as visible in our master's work as Mantegna's, showing especially in his wonderful chiaroscuro. Yet it is difficult to imagine how it can have been exerted. No one has shown, even to the point of probability, that can-

[1] In 1506, not in 1517 as formerly believed.

vases of Leonardo's had found their way to Mantua or Modena; and it is still more improbable that Correggio ever visited Milan. Again, there is strong evidence to disprove the fact, which was long asserted, that Correggio learned perspective of Melozzo da Forli; and it is conclusively shown that he never travelled to Bologna or to Rome.

If we come down to facts we find that Antonio's youth was spent between Correggio, Mantua, and Modena, and was influenced only by the forces that these towns could bring to bear. General culture, including a knowledge of anatomy, he is said to have imbibed from Giambattista Lombardi, a physician who has been supposed the original of the Dresden portrait called "Le Medecin du Corrège."[1] From Mantegna's pictures he learned some of the magic methods of his craft, and possibly from Leonardo's, though we cannot imagine how.

[1] Lombardi may have taught Correggio, and this picture may represent Lombardi; but Correggio did not paint it. Modern criticism is decisive on this point, and, I may say in parenthesis, it is decisive too, in denying the authenticity of that "Reading Magdalene," also in the Dresden gallery, which for so many generations has been the most popular "Correggio" in the world.

While still in his teens he was back at Correggio, his education finished, his contact with art and artists forever at an end. Now he painted the Dresden "St. Francis," with its clear echo of Mantegna yet unmistakable personal accent. All the pictures credited to the next few years are of doubtful authenticity. But the year 1517 bequeathed us the famous "Marriage of St. Catherine" which hangs in the Louvre. No teacher had given the lad further counsel, no other great man's work a further inspiration. Yet from the "St. Catherine" all traces of Mantegna have disappeared. Here, at the age of twenty-three, Correggio is as exclusively and as fully himself as when he paints the Dresden "Night" a few years before his death; and through the intervening period runs the current of his lovely work, untroubled by outward influences or by mutations in the man himself. There is no narrowness in Correggio's art, no mannerism, no limitation to one kind of subject-matter; but sentiment and technical style are always the same — varying in their manifestations but consistent with themselves throughout.

In 1518 Correggio left his village for a

somewhat wider field at Parma, probably in answer to a direct invitation as important orders were at once forthcoming. Between this year and 1524 he painted his frescoes in the cloisters of San Paolo, in the church of San Giovanni, and in the dome of the cathedral. Near the latter date also belong his most famous easel-pictures. Once he almost came in contact with the great outer world. Through some channel unknown to us, Federigo, Duke of Mantua, ordered two mythological pictures of him as a gift for the Emperor Charles. But it is proved as clearly as proof is possible that Correggio himself was not called to Mantua; and the fact is a measure of his obscurity, for Federigo stood in close friendship with many other artists. The commission was doubtless given in a half-careless way as proper patronage for "local talent." It is impossible to say, moreover, for whom Correggio painted the other pictures in that series of the "Loves of Jupiter" to which the two designed for Charles V. belong.

Correggio married in 1519 during a visit home; but his wife seems to have followed him back to Parma only after an interval of several years. She died, most probably,

in 1528; and in 1530 Correggio returned to his native town, where he spent the remaining four years of his life.

In this last change of residence we have a forcible proof of his unlikeness to the other great painters of his day. It is true that at Parma he had no equals in his art, no rivals, and scarcely any fellow-workers. Even there he was out of the main current of influence, competition, and reward. But he had at least a public of some size which had given him commissions for noble work; and his foot was on the threshold of the rich outer world. A return to Correggio was a deliberate retreat, in the very prime of early manhood, to the obscure monotony of village life and the limitations of easel-painting. Such a move stands indeed in contrast to the wish for full existence, the search for grand opportunities, the love of conflict, fame, and favor that so essentially characterized the artists of the Renaissance.

There is nothing further to tell about Correggio. He died at the age of forty, apparently in full possession of his powers. It was a short life, yet three years longer than Raphael's; and Raphael had found time and strength for a cycle of work still

wider than Correggio's, for the occupations of a courtier first, and later of a veritable prince, and for the labors of an architect, an antiquary, and a teacher of the whole artist-generation just below him. Raphael's full, ambitious life may seem exceptional in the eyes of to-day; but it was the natural, typical life of an artist in his time. And Raphael's funeral, Raphael's tomb, were but the necessary tribute of his age to the endowments that it valued most. The real place to be surprised is when we find Correggio's grave covered by a wooden slab with merely "*Antonius de Allegris, Pictor*," carved upon it, and, looking further on history's page, discover that it was a hundred years before even a few words cut in stone replaced this first curt record.

If Correggio's life was isolated, so, too, is the art which it produced. We have seen how he learned all the skill of hand that he did not teach himself. But the men who instructed him had nothing in common with the style, the spirit, the character — the soul, in a word — of his mature performance. After the age of twenty-three his work is as alien from Mantegna's sculpturesque gravity as from the subtile,

serious intellectuality of Leonardo. Two men have painted the smile of women — Leonardo and Correggio; but in the smiling of the "Mona Lisa" on the one hand, and of Correggio's Madonnas on the other, we see only a proof of antipodal contrast between the minds that wrought them.

Nor does Correggio stand closer in his art to his contemporaries than to his forerunners. His work is not included in any school, but must be studied by and in itself. Can this be said of any of his equals? The four great Venetians — Giorgione and Titian, Veronese and Tintoretto — are blossoms of the same stock, and we must see them side by side and in the company of all their teachers before we can appreciate their similarity in nature and diversities in development. So the Tuscans must be looked at in groups if the outline of each is to be clearly traced; but in Parma no juxtaposition helps us, no comparison serves as a test of style or spirit. We find a distinct and very important phase of art, but it is contained in this one man alone. He has no father among earlier great men; no rival stands beside him; no pupils carry on his work. Parmegianino's is the only name

that can be cited, and Parmegianino was not so much a scholar whom Correggio influenced as a tool whom he employed. When he did more than help his master paint, he painted weak dilutions of his master's pictures. It is true that Correggio exerted an immense influence upon painting — an influence wider than that of any other man except Michael Angelo. But it was a posthumous, a long posthumous, influence. It started from his pictures, not from himself; and from his pictures only when time had slowly brought them out from the obscurity which was their first estate. The so-called "school of Parma" means Correggio alone, the scale of his own perfections, the test of all possible achievements in his own line.

III.

Among the qualities which may exist in a work of art is a voice that reveals the temperament of its creator. This quality is often an item in the highest general perfection, but it sometimes goes far to redeem an art that is deficient on other sides. Perhaps we scarcely find a trace of it in the whole achievement of some mighty painter; per-

haps it will disclose itself in the single hasty sketch of a man whom no one could call great. Every painting, of course, reveals to some extent the man who painted it. It tells us what he could do, what he preferred to see, and how he thought and felt while he was at work; and, each picture telling thus of one moment and its mood, all a man's work collectively judged must give us in some sense the average of his soul. But by the quality to which I have referred I mean more than such testimony as this. There is more to be said of a man sometimes than that he saw and felt and thought and did. There is such a thing as *being* in an individual way that imparts a particular flavor to everything seen and felt and thought and done. This quality is not character; it is not strength, whether of mind or hand or inner vision. It is temperament — a sort of individual, peculiar atmosphere that pervades all sides of life, mental, moral, physical, emotional. It is a quality that we recognize at once in our intercourse with men, though we might find it difficult to put a finger on the special words or acts through which it shows; and we recognize it just as readily in art, al-

though it is just as difficult of explanation there. Is there not a personal voice that speaks to us when Leonardo or Memling paints, when Michael Angelo uses brush or chisel, when Luca della Robbia moulds his clay, when Rembrandt or Dürer or Whistler etches a line, when Rubens or Hals, Tintoretto or Turner lays a color? Do we hear this voice from Titian, even, or from Veronese, from Holbein, or from Reynolds, or from Raphael himself? It is a voice that joins, we see, names quite incongruous in all else, and separates with a bold division gifts and methods otherwise close akin. It is independent of all other powers. It does not exist in uniformity of mood, medium, or manner — who is more various in all of these than Rembrandt? It does not need a wide cycle of work to reveal it — who is so fragmentary as Leonardo? It does not lack through any deficiency we can name — who is so scholarly as Raphael, who so equably endowed as Titian? Nor can we say, on the other hand, that it exists because of some deficiency — some shadow or limit in one direction which brings out other qualities in a clearer light. Less than anything, however, can this quality be called deliber-

ate, self-conscious. No one could be more naïve than Memling, for instance, no one more spontaneous than Frans Hals.

There are critics, I know, who profess to look upon this subtilely obtruded personality of the artist as superfluous, if not impertinent, in a work of art. Ruskin, in the more didactic of his many moods, is a good example. He tells us then that the artist should sink himself entirely in the things he renders, being no more than nature's humble, faithful copyist. Certain painters, likewise, — devotees of the so-called "realistic" schools, — have expressed the utmost disgust at the idea of putting anything of themselves into the work in hand. But the first froth of Ruskin's influence has blown away; and all the declarations of the realists cannot longer blind us to the fact that their practice contradicts their precepts; — no one declaimed in louder words against personality in art than Courbet, yet few painters have ever put themselves more plainly upon canvas. So I think I shall hardly provoke discussion when I affirm that the suggested temperament of the artist is one of the most precious qualities that a work of art can have. It is not the noblest, but

surely it is the most attractive; and I know every student of art will agree with me when I say that no other painted work is richer in this quality than Correggio's.

It is Correggio's temperament that first appeals to us in his pictures, full though they are of all other kinds of interest. It is this that makes them so passionately beloved by some, so heartily disliked by others. No observer can be indifferent to Correggio as he may be to even greater artists. If we care for his pictures, we almost forget the design which we incessantly think of with Raphael; we do not dwell upon the rendering as we do with Titian; nor do we rest in the simple ocular delight which suffices us with Veronese, or prize the dramatic meaning as with Tintoretto. We care for them first of all because Correggio painted them — because he put his soul into them, and because that soul is one that pleases ours. If, on the other hand, we dislike his pictures, it must be in Ruskin's way — finding no fault with them as pictures but protesting against the soul behind. In short, the power of a mighty painter is almost outvoiced on Correggio's canvas by the power of an individual artistic temperament. Its

greatest value is that it radiates the glamour of an imagined world distinct from all imaginings of other men — a world into which Correggio alone was born, and into which we cannot penetrate except when he swings the door. Leonardo is the only painter, I think, who has so strong a personal voice as he, and how much fuller and more varied is his legacy than Leonardo's!

All this has been said of Correggio many times before. Even Vasari felt the individuality of his charm. "Near them," he writes, "is a boy representing a little angel, who is smiling so naturally that all who look on him are moved to smile also; nor is there any one, however melancholy his temperament, who can behold him without feeling a sensation of pleasure;" and in modern times many writers have tried their best, through endless florid periods, to define what they are forced at last to call "the Correggiosity of Correggio."

All agree that no one can behold his figures "without a sensation of pleasure;" but some of them protest that it is an immoral sensation. There was once a pietistic prince who cut the head out of a copy of Correggio's "Leda" because he thought it "abomina-

ble" in expression. And Mr. Ruskin, perhaps, would not have condemned his act, for he calls the "Antiope" of the Louvre an example of the "highest seventh circle" in "that whole vast false heaven of sensual passion, full of nymphs, graces, goddesses, and I know not what." Bluntness of perception speaks in these words. One of the first things a man should learn — if he does not feel it by instinct — when he addresses himself to the study of art is that sensuousness is not sensuality. Mr. Symonds is a juster critic.[1] He says that it would be ridiculous to accuse Correggio of "conscious immorality, or of what is stigmatized as sensuality." Yet when he compares Correggio's treatment of grave subjects with Rossini's treatment of solemn themes, and refers to the "Stabat Mater" in illustration, he underrates the painter or gives the composer too much praise. Correggio's work is never solemn or profound in a moral way; but it never shows a trace of the frivolity, the meretricious glitter, that we find in Rossini's sacred music. Were the comparison a just one it would embody an even deadlier charge than Ruskin brings. Sensual art

[1] *Sketches in Italy and Greece, — Parma.*

may be noble and perfect as art — though blameworthy from the moralist's point of view — if conceived with dignity, sincerity, and strength; but an insincere or trivial accent means instant degradation even from the most purely artistic stand-point. Correggio was in earnest when he painted, whether his earnestness resembles what ours would be or not. His figures are not divine, but though mundane they are never worldly. The spirit of his art is not of heaven, but it dwells in Arcadia, and when we say Arcadia we say sensuous, but healthy and sincere. If his pictures are found unwholesome for our eyes, the fault is less theirs than ours. We have Puritan blood in our veins and can never forget that Adam fell. When we find ourselves in Arcady we try to believe that it is Eden, and when we see that it is not we decide it must be Babylon of the prophets.

The key-note of Correggio's art is a vivid, intense, yet tender and voluptuous delight in the mere fact of physical existence. All his beings, says Mr. Symonds, "are created for pleasure, not for thought or passion or activity or heroism. The uses of their brains, their limbs, their every feature, end in enjoyment; innocent and radiant wan-

tonness is the condition of their whole existence. Correggio conceived the universe under the one mood of sensuous joy; his world was bathed in luxuriant light; its inhabitants were capable of little beyond a soft voluptuousness." But, once again, his phrases are too strong when he says, "Leonardo painted souls whereof the features and limbs are but an index. The charm of Michael Angelo's ideal is like a flower upon a tree of rugged strength. Raphael aims at the loveliness which cannot be disjoined from goodness. But Correggio is contented with bodies 'delicate and desirable.'" Not quite, I think. There are souls behind his tender bodies and smiling faces, and souls, we feel, that are delicate and sweet-natured, that are joyous and innocent in their very essence, and not merely at the one pictured moment. We have never seen just such beings as he paints, but we wish we could; and we should not say as much of creatures that were sensual on the one hand or entirely soulless on the other. Correggio is never so completely himself as when he paints little children and half-grown boys; the beauty of youth was what he loved best, and he makes it as innocent as the beauty of flowers,

yet full of meaning and affection as well as joy.

The strain that runs through all Correggio's themes — from his adorations of the Holy Infant to his amours of Jupiter — is sensuousness, not sensuality. His satyr is not coarse if his Christ-child is not divine. Antiope, Leda, Io, Danaë, are not brutalized and consciously transgressing; they are merely natural, unsophisticated, living near Olympus for the day and its delights. And when he paints the madonna we see a similar nature to theirs although in a soberer mood. In Correggio's madonnas is struck the lowest note in that long scale where the highest is struck by the holy presence of Raphael's "Sistina." I do not mean the lowest possible note or the lowest that has actually been struck, but the lowest that is compatible with artistic harmony between idea and expression. Correggio's madonnas are not, as some have been, bacchantes, Phrynes, or dull Italian peasants; nor are they absolutely earthly and uninspired; but they are inspired by the airs of Arcady, by love of pleasurable life, and affection for an infant which might be a tiny pagan god. They are far below the divinity of Raphael's

greatest conception; but the antique heroines who call them sister are far above the conscious sensuality we find in those of Giulio Romano and of many recent painters whom I need not name.

IV.

Few painters have worshipped pure beauty as Correggio did. Not one, I think, has approached it in so passionate yet tender a way. Symonds gives us the right term — he paints in a "dithyrambic ecstasy." Take the "St. Catherine" at Paris. We could scarcely realize a mood of such overflowing yet childlike, touching joy had not Correggio made it plain to us — such a radiance of physical life free from all accents of exaggeration or affectation. And how tender it is, how sure we are that the painter loved what he painted, and was content with himself and his work and the world that he lived in!

Here the critics may point us back to Vasari and say we are mistaken. According to his account Correggio "could not even persuade himself that he knew anything satisfactorily with regard to his art;" he was morbid and unhappy if not misan-

thropical, often in dire straits for money, and miserly when he got it. His death, we are bidden to believe, was a result of his penuriousness. A large payment had been made him in coppers; he insisted upon carrying it home on his back, and fell ill of the over-exertion. These fables are denied, however, by modern inquirers; and if we have any faith in the language of art we should deny them on its single witness. No one could have painted as Correggio did and been the man whom Vasari represents.

Yet even if we make the best that we can of Correggio's life, it may still seem strange, at first sight, that it produced the art we see. It was an uneventful, unambitious life, passed in a monotony of constant labor away from all the sumptuous public pleasure-making of the time, and from all artistic inspiration. We cannot think of the case as one when fate refused an artist the existence he would have liked. It was not a century of casts and grooves and scanty opportunities; Correggio's narrow life must have been deliberately chosen, or borne through lack of will to break a very feeble chain. Nor, again, was it an

age when artists masqueraded and showed one face in their life, another in their work. Intellectual freedom was absolute, freedom of conduct almost as great. The influence of the spirit of the age did not tend to choke originality in any direction. It was not a dogmatic spirit trying to regulate action of any kind. It was a spirit of wide and generous appreciation. It meant hearty encouragement to every man to develop what was in him — whether for moral good or evil did not matter much so long as there was æsthetic gain. Criticism spoke in every breath of air, but for incitement, not constraint. The pictures painted in Correggio's time were kept within the bounds of the strictly legitimate in art; painting was not distorted, as it so often has been since, to render literary tales or didactic meanings. Yet the lines within which it flourished were extremely wide. No pictorial idea of any sort was denied expression. There were no rules for choice of theme or manner of treatment except such as any one who was born an artist would mark out for himself. Therefore there was no temptation for an artist to make his pictures conform to a stricter code or a looser code than

the one which guided his daily life. Correggio chose to paint the sensuous side of the Renaissance; but it had a purely intellectual side which often attracted Raphael, and a fiercely moral side which Michael Angelo shows. Correggio painted as he did simply because his temperament so prescribed.

Nor, on the other hand, was there anything in public opinion to bid an artist make his existence more ascetic and "respectable" than the dreams he put on canvas. All men of bold, consistent lives then commanded admiration — Vittorio da Feltre, Federigo of Urbino, Michael Angelo, Benvenuto Cellini, Leo X., good or bad it does not seem to have mattered much. No one would have blamed Correggio had he devoted his life to pleasure, sought the sunshine of court favor, and tried his best to make a place for his pictures on the walls of the Vatican. Why then does there seem such a contrast between his life and his work? Why are they not alike as they are with a Titian, a Raphael, a Luca, a Fra Angelico, a Dürer, a Van Dyck? Even Paul Veronese's pictures scarcely show so passionate a love for physical and emotional

pleasures; why did he not live like Veronese? Or, choosing such a life as he led, why did he not paint like Fra Angelico or Claude or Salvator Rosa — gentle saints and placid madonnas, or quiet landscapes full of contemplative feeling, or wild ones torn as though with misanthropic passion?

We may feel pretty sure, however, that when a man's work speaks with so personal a voice as Correggio's it records no paradox. Its witness must be true. If we do not see the truth it is because we misunderstand the man or misread the art. Look a little more closely at Correggio's work and the paradox it seems to speak of disappears. It is passionately sensuous work, and so is Paul Veronese's. But what a difference between them! Veronese paints the sensuous contemporary life of Venice; Correggio, the sensuous, time-unfettered life of an imaginary paradise. One got his inspiration from without, the other from within. One paints even his Holy Families in Italian palaces and his Kings of the East from Venetian senators and Arab nobles. The scenes of the other are nowhere but in cloud-land, his figures have no prototypes but in his own imagination. The same may be said, of course,

of Michael Angelo, of Raphael in his higher moods, and of many other artists of the time. But, Correggio stands alone among the idealists of his day in being so frankly, entirely sensuous. When the pure intellect worked, then the painter looked inward for inspiration; but when the love of physical beauty worked, then, except in Correggio's case, he turned his eyes on the world about him, studied local types, current costumes, visible architectural facts, and neighboring landscapes; and, whatever he called his pictures, he made them transcripts of the life of the day. There is nothing of all this in Correggio's work. When he paints the Holy Family, in the famous "Night" at Dresden, he shows us a simple stable; his costumes are merely draperies; his accessories are but wreaths of flowers and fruit; his faces belong to no special land or time. We rarely see their living reflection, but are as apt to see it in America as in the streets of Parma. There was no real reason, therefore, why he should have sought the pleasures of the world. There was every reason, indeed, why he could content himself with a narrow form of existence, and find all the delight he craved

in solitude or domestic life. Some have believed that he abandoned Parma for his native village because he was heart-broken at the death of his wife. I should be glad to feel sure of this. A passionate love for one woman, beautiful, perhaps, but born amid humble surroundings, would go far to explain both the peculiar joyousness which speaks from his art and that willingness to live in retirement which seems so foreign to the general temper of his time.

V.

But the most important fact to remember is that Correggio felt and expressed this temper in a way peculiar to himself. We can reconcile the quiet monotony of his life with the tender sensuousness of his art. But taking the life and the art together, his figure stands out strongly from the background of his period. Yet, I may protest once more, the witness of art is never untrue. Read deeply enough, and we shall see something of the man in his work and something of the time in the man. Correggio's temperament would have been an exceptional one in any age. Idyllic poets of his calibre and quality are never com-

mon; but, born as he was and where he was, it is not unnatural that he should have developed as he did. And the very fact that his temperament was exceptional gives his work a peculiar historic value. It shows us a side of the Renaissance that nowhere else is shown so clearly. We cannot really compare him with any one else, but we can contrast him with earlier men who were idyllic poets too. One of them is Luca della Robbia; upon the character of his work I need not insist again. Another is Botticelli, who comes later than Luca, earlier than Correggio. Admirable in its way from the point of view of expression, Botticelli's art is tentative, transitional in spirit. Christian feeling has not wholly disappeared, but it is mixed with the resuscitated sentiment of paganism. Neither the soul nor the body reigns supreme; neither this life nor the life to come is frankly celebrated; we are conscious that a battle is waging between the mediæval and the classic influence, and that the painter loves them both and surrenders himself to neither. But in Correggio's day, Christianity as a vital force in art no longer exists; paganism reigns. Correggio never saw a

touch of Praxiteles's chisel, yet, he came closer to its spirit than to that which speaks from the tool of any other artist. There is nothing so like a young saint of Correggio's as the "Faun of the Capitol" or the recently discovered "Hermes" at Olympia. Of course the similarity is not identity; in the one case we have a sculptor's ideal, in the other a painter's, and no painter is less sculpturesque in style than Correggio; but this very fact makes the distinct analogy in feeling all the more remarkable.

If, now, we compare Correggio's work with that of frankly sensuous artists who belong to later generations, we see that its artistic balance and repose, its purity of taste and tender sincerity, are replaced by qualities of a truly sensual sort. His work is not more different from Luca della Robbia's than it is from the impure, attitudinizing, over-blown work of Bernini. And thus he is as typical of the middle bloom of Renaissance art as is Botticelli of its earlier and Bernini of its later flowering. He expresses, from the point of view of an idyllic poet, the full-grown life of Italy when all the influences upon which it fed had been digested, and before the new energy they

produced had begun to fail. His work is the very essence of this life, seen — by a poet — from its physical not its intellectual side; and it is especially valuable to students of history because it gives this sensuous side without any support from higher things. We learn from Correggio better than from any one else that the sensuousness of the Middle Renaissance, wide and deep though it was, irresponsible and unmoral as it frankly professed itself to be, was yet a very different thing from the sensuality of an Asian court or of pagan Rome in her decadent days. In such a soil as that no idyllic poet could have sung with a voice like Correggio's. Later, when the soil of Italy had degenerated, Correggio's language was widely copied and used to express thoughts less innocent and sincere than his; and to this fact may be laid much of the condemnation that has fallen upon his head. It is not difficult, perhaps, to read into a genuine Correggio the spirit of the false Correggios which his imitators painted; but if we look at the real ones with unprejudiced eyes, we shall see sensuousness indeed but no sensuality.

Only one more question remains to be

asked: Educated as he was and living as he did, how could Correggio develop a technical manner so scientific, so well balanced, so complete — so personal to himself yet so uneccentric? To this question I can give no answer. He accomplished in isolation quite as much as any one accomplished who was helped by the most prolific schools and the noblest rivalry; and, in certain directions, more than any one else has ever accomplished. The only solution is to acknowledge that he had an exceptional share of the genius which was then a commoner commodity than it seems to-day.

III.

WILLIAM BLAKE.

1757–1827.

For reasons which are inherent in his work William Blake will doubtless never be well known to the general public. But to students and true lovers of art he is no longer *pictor ignotus*, as, with justice, his biographer called him not very long ago. During the past few years he has often been written about, clearly described, sympathetically explained. Indeed, it would seem almost impertinent should I profess to speak about him here in the belief that I had found anything in his work hitherto undiscovered or unrevealed. Gilchrist, in his "Life," [1] gives an all-sufficient account of Blake's person and experiences; and if, as I think, he sometimes overrates Blake's ability, the fact weighs nothing in comparison with the lucid way in which he in-

[1] *Life of William Blake; with Selections from his Poems and other Writings.* By Alexander Gilchrist.

terprets his work as a whole, entering into its spirit and seizing its essence while seeing most of its defects and emphasizing most of its limitations. But as the judgment of almost all Americans must be founded upon the words and illustrations of this book, I am tempted to recall an exhibition held a few years ago at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and note in how far its contents seemed to protest against some of Gilchrist's conclusions.

His pages should be studied, however, by all who desire to understand Blake. There never was a talent more personal than his, and therefore the better one knows the man the clearer becomes the value of his work. Here it must suffice to say that he had little external history except such as lay in a constant struggle against poverty and want of appreciation. He lived a curious, secluded life, working many hours of every day in a cramped little bed-chamber, visited by visions and comforted by a most sympathetic wife. He was scarcely a denizen of the world at all. He lived in his own dreams and fantasies, and in the effort to express them with pencil and pen. Some thought him a crazy man; one or two seem

to have believed almost as firmly as himself in the supernatural character of his imaginings; but all recognized a singularly pure and unworldly spirit, and to-day his fame as an artist is secure within a circle which, though narrow, includes some almost idolatrous enthusiasts.

I.

A large number of the prints and drawings in the Boston exhibition had been borrowed from the collection of Mrs. Gilchrist, and could therefore be accepted as the most excellent examples which it had been possible to find during a search that lasted over many years. There were also a number of water-colors belonging to Mr. E. W. Hooper of Cambridge, — an enthusiastic collector of Blakes, — and a few contributions from other sources, among them the artist's masterpiece, the "Book of Job," loaned by Mr. Scudder. In the same category with this last, showing Blake's talent as an engraver of his own designs, was the large plate of Chaucer's "Canterbury Pilgrims." Twelve of the plates for Blair's "Grave" showed how his designs looked when translated by another. The water-colors were,

to all appearance, sufficient in number and quality to give a fair notion of his work in that direction, and were supplemented by a number of what Blake called "fresco" paintings. Additional books, single printed plates, — some with color added by hand, — and engravings after the designs of others, were also included, so that the list was practically complete of all the kinds of art which Blake cultivated side by side during his earnest and laborious life. It will be seen that here were data enough from which to judge the artist and the estimates of his biographer.

The first point upon which one was impelled to disagree with Gilchrist was, I think, his eulogy of Blake as a colorist. No doubt the hand-applied color adds a great deal to the design in such plates as those of the "Songs of Innocence;" without it they are but rough and incomplete, though they show, indeed, marks of power and hints of beauty. Of course I do not mean that, uncolored, they are "unfinished" in that popular acceptation of the word which, as every artist knows, is so often used with regard to work that is entirely finished in the best and truest way. I

mean that they are evidently incomplete to the artist's eye as well as to that of his critic. This may readily be seen in the four or five uncolored plates from the "Songs" which are given in Gilchrist's "Life." But even when completed they do not bear out his estimate of Blake's gift for color. They convince one, rather, that he is being judged by a false standard if judged as a painter in the full sense of the term. Blake was certainly an artist by endowment, and a draughtsman of great force and often of singular skill; but a painter not at all — neither in aim, by cultivation, nor, seemingly, by nature. His theories were those of a draughtsman simply. We are told of his enthusiasm for the hard-and-fast line, his contempt for "melting tints" and atmospheric gradations, his condemnation — utter and ferocious — of the Venetian school and the Flemish, of Sir Joshua's methods, of everything and everybody identified with painting properly so named. It may, of course, be argued that a man's theories, however distinctly held and forcibly expressed, are not always in accordance with his practice. We have only to look, however, at the first

colored cut or "fresco" of Blake's that meets our eye to perceive that his theories were actually emphasized in his practice. In truth, we ought not, most often, even to call his system of color *painting*. It is usually mere *illumination* of a peculiar sort — sometimes hopelessly puerile, sometimes very effective and attractive, but rarely even simulating true painter's work. His colors, as Gilchrist says, are often beautiful in themselves and an immense addition to the clearness of his design. But they are not employed as are a painter's hues. They are meant primarily to give a decorative effect to the page, and do not attempt to translate nature, either realistically or ideally. In proof we have Gilchrist's own mention of a sheet where a tiger is painted with every color, almost, save tiger-colors, while these appear on a tree in his vicinity.

The process which Blake called "fresco" consisted in a curious manner of painting with water-colors on a plastered ground which had been applied to board, canvas, or linen. It more nearly resembled tempera than any other recognized way of working; and one can readily imagine that whether it

constituted the whole picture or was superadded to a drawn or printed outline, it did not result in a very satisfactory kind of color — the tints as a rule being heavy and opaque without the least hint of brilliancy or depth. It had all the limitations of both oil and water-color, and few of the virtues of either.

Even apart from the question of color Blake's technical performance is extremely variable: at times he draws like a clever child, at times he draws so that not the greatest master could surpass him. But one should not, in justice, approach his work from the technical side. What one should notice first is its imaginative, creative side. Of all the artists who have ever lived he is the one with whom conception goes for most, technical expression for least. It has often been said that Blake was a poet not a painter, that he strove to realize in graphic art ideas and conceptions suited only to expression in words — or even, as some have held, in music. That he had a poet's inspiration no one who reads his verse can doubt. But his handling of words was even less accomplished than his handling of the pencil. He had mastered the art of verse

less thoroughly than the art of lines and colors, for there are instances where he shows perfect control of line at least, but very few, and those of the simplest sort, where he has sufficient control over metrical forms to carry him with success through a single poem. More works of Blake's in the domain of art are admirably rendered than in the domain of poetry. A few almost perfect little lyrics may be named, but what is to match the "Job"? I do not think that the ideas Blake attempted to put on paper were unpictorial. On the contrary, they are remarkable for just that coherence, definiteness, and precision which are the essential characteristics of things pictorially conceived in contrast to those which are poetically conceived. The things which appealed to his imagination, I confess, were such as a painter rarely loves, a poet often; and this fact has led superficial critics to declare that he strove to paint unpictorial themes. But it is not the theme itself, it is the way it presents itself to the imagination that renders it fit or unfit for translation by the graphic arts. When Blake's imagination worked with a view to pictorial expression it worked in a truly pictorial manner;

and if he sometimes failed to translate it through a successful picture, it was simply because his technical resources were insufficient, or because he erred in the way that he applied them.

This is proved, I think, by even the most superficial study of Blake's imperfectly executed works. A non-pictorial idea may have a certain worth or interest, if cleverly expressed. But a non-pictorial idea half expressed in a rude or stumbling way can have no value whatsoever. Both artistic factors being cancelled, the result must surely be null and void. Now, as some of Blake's designs which are almost ludicrously inefficient in treatment are both interesting and impressive, their fundamental conception must be pictorially fine. A great potential picture must exist beneath the imperfect one we see. Take, for example, "Elijah in the Fiery Chariot." Even in the fine woodcut which reproduced it some years ago in "Scribner's Magazine" it seemed, from a technical point of view, very imperfect; and in the large hand-finished print we saw at Boston the rudeness of its execution was still more clearly seen. The color was extremely conventional without

possessing any intrinsic charm — heavy, crude, and disagreeable ; and even the drawing was far from perfect. At first glance one was repelled by the almost childish inefficiency of the treatment ; but after a moment the eye accepted this, penetrated below it, seized the spirit of Blake's conception, saw the supernatural grandeur he had seen, and felt the solemn inspiration that had swayed him. And as with this, so it is with all Blake's compositions. They appeal to us with force and clearness in spite of his imperfect command over the resources of his craft. Surely it must be because he always had a strong grasp upon his subject, saw it clearly himself, conceived it with exactness. Surely no subject can be thus seen by an artist unless it is pictorial in its essence ; and surely no man can thus see and feel any subject unless he is an artist born. A mere thinker who tries to paint his thoughts could never speak so strongly, even were his forms of speech less stammering than Blake's very often were.

The same truth is taught by a study of Blake's verse. Its vagueness, formlessness, incoherence, and obscurity prove that he was constantly possessed by visions of the wild-

est, dimmest, and most fluctuating kind. Yet he used his pencil only to express such things as he conceived in a definite and vivid way. Other things — non-pictorial ideas — he kept for interpretation by his pen. The strangest inventions of his prolific pencil wear the most clear and graphic shapes. There is nothing vague about the "Visionary Heads," for instance. Look at the "Personified Flea" — the fantastic impossibility yet the logical precision of the idea. It is terrible, almost, in its convincing reality. Or, if we turn to more important things, who, we might ask, could imagine the exit of a soul from the body and show it to us with clearness, representing both soul and body in seemingly prosaic human shapes, with no cloud of mystery, no atmosphere of the supernatural about them, yet characterizing each with lucidness and power? An Orcagna might do it, or a sculptor of mediæval France. But I doubt whether any one but a Michael Angelo could have done it quite so well as William Blake. It is natural that a person who reads a catalogue of Blake's designs should deem their subjects scarcely suited to interpretation in graphic art. His imagination, as Gil-

christ says, is different *in kind* from that of any other great artist who ever lived; and this difference I cannot better explain than by saying, once more, it is of the kind that poets most often own. But if we look at the drawings themselves instead of their titles we see that his imagination did not mistake the limits which, for him, marked the confines of art's true realm. It had simply been so much clearer and intenser than that of other painters that he was able to use materials well which would infallibly have led them on to utter shipwreck. His wildest, most supersensual themes were not, I repeat, imagined as a poet would have dreamed them, but were seen with the lucid vision which meant definite outline, detail, and expression. No one but an artist can see things thus with the mental eye; and an artist must always see them thus — whether they be things in the realm of sense or far above it — if he would adequately represent them by means of pictorial art.

II.

But the extraordinary impressiveness of Blake's conceptions means something more than that he must have seen them very

clearly in his own mind. He must have felt them intensely, and must passionately have believed in them. From this point of view it is interesting to compare his work with Gustav Doré's where subjects of a similar sort are frequent — angels and devils, scenes of mystery and awe, visions of the night and waking dreams, embodiments of the unknown, in a light that never was on sea or land. It would be impossible for the designs of any two men to impress us more differently. There is a note of insincerity through all of Doré's work; it seems the work of a man who had taken an interest, of course, in what he was about, but not a very vital interest, and who had not believed in it for an hour. Blake's illustrations of Dante I do not know save through the tiny fragments given in his "Life." But without knowing them at all we might be sure that he could not have drawn a line to match a word of Dante's which would not make us feel that he had believed, as firmly as the poet himself believed, in the truth of the idea expressed. If he had not thus believed, he simply would not and could not have touched the subject at all. This we know from the record of his life. But we might

tell it just as surely from the sign-manual of sincerity and intense absorption that rests on every line he drew. Doré's pictures excite our interest, — curiosity were perhaps the better word, — and show an inexhaustible fancy. But they never rise to the heights where Dante dwells. They terrify or sicken our sense, perhaps; they never stir our imagination or move our heart as truly imaginative work must do — as Blake's work does in the hastiest and simplest and sketchiest examples. Had Blake illustrated Dante with the fulness that Doré essayed, each of his designs would have been as distinct and firm, as coherent and expressive, as the poet's verse, because he would have believed in the poet's visions as entirely and seen them as distinctly as the poet did himself. But Doré is clear and exact only when he has scenes to depict which can be composed with common human factors — scenes of grotesque torture or mere physical transformation, wherein small appeal is made to the higher fancy; and this is true, we feel, because these were the only scenes he even attempted to believe in. Even here he fails in the one point where true imaginative power was still required. In facial expression his

figures are always disappointing. They are not tragic or pathetic, however agonized they may be. They do not move us with "pity and terror" no matter how much we may shrink from the horror of their fate. They affect the nerves alone without stirring the emotions. In the whole of Doré's "Inferno" and "Purgatorio" there is not as much tragic power as in Blake's one little print called "The Death of the Strong Wicked Man."

When we turn from tragedies to visions of beauty and wonder the difference is wider still. In Doré's views of heaven there is a wonderful sense of space and multitude. I know of no art whatsoever in which these two things are so well expressed. But they are not the most important things, and the very fact that Doré realized them takes all value from his individual figures — they are lost in the vagueness which expresses their multitude so well. Doré's innumerable companies of angels are mere wingèd things — things which fill all space, it is true, but in themselves are nothing. There is not one among them all that expresses adoration, purity, strength, intelligence, or even beauty. There

is not one which expresses any attribute of angelhood as all such attributes are expressed by many of Blake's figures even in his frames and borders.

Even here, where they are not an inch in length and are made with two or three tiny touches of the point, Blake's angels are as definite, individual, and angelic to our eyes as they must have been to the inner eye of the man who could draw them thus. What shall we say, then, of those in the fourteenth plate of the "Job" — of those magnificent "Sons of God" who "shouted for joy"? What, except that they are surely the most perfect, tremendous, and dramatic types of angelhood that art has ever given to the world — wrapped in no penumbra of vague mystery like Doré's, but as accurately and distinctly shown as though they had stood in Blake's little chamber while he drew.

In beauty, which is another indispensable element in imaginative design, Blake surpasses Doré just as much as in verity and decision. There is not a beautiful face in all Doré's work, and not a beautiful line of any sort except in the most formal arrangements. With Blake beauty is the rule.

When he has a happy theme — as when he portrays the daughters of Job on the last plate of the series — nothing could exceed the beauty of his result in line and type; and even when he pursues effects of tragedy and terror his instinct keeps him well within the bounds of grace. I have already compared his imagination to that of the Gothic sculptor with whom he had, indeed, very much in common. But in this matter of beauty a sharp line divides them. In vividness and strength of conception Blake was the Gothic sculptor's peer. In artistic symmetry of concrete invention he was immeasurably ahead.

III.

In referring to the "Book of Job" I have touched upon the most perfect product of Blake's long and busy life. The designs for Blair's "Grave" are wonderfully fine, and the way in which Schiavonetti etched them has charm if not great strength to recommend it. But in the "Job" Blake wisely was his own engraver. He chose a technical method in which he was especially competent, carried it through with wonderful success, and rendered his

thoughts as no other man could have done. Any one plate taken alone seems a masterpiece, and the whole series together — so well-sustained, so equal in merit, so level, I had almost said, with the work of the poet it interprets — is one of the finest, completest products of imaginative art that the world has seen. Whatever may be Blake's technical shortcomings elsewhere, this "Book of Job" is absolutely perfect. Everything is done in pure line with a sharpness, definiteness, and vigor of touch that are marvellous to behold. The use of line to express variety and depth of chiaroscuro, and such intangible things as flame and vapor and whirling winds, is audacious past all precedent, yet its own complete excuse; for if there are one or two lapses from conventionally correct drawing, we feel that they have been deliberately made for the purpose of emphasizing the dominant idea. The imaginative power which has incarnated the Chaldæan's tremendous words shows almost equally in every plate of the series; and the bold *naïveté* of the means employed in its expression recalls the early days of some great school. There seems no sign of an artist who was heir to all the

ages and whose mind was impregnated with the manners and the mannerisms of a dozen generations.

It is difficult, indeed, to realize that Blake lived when and where he did. It is difficult to realize that England, whose painters have been poorer, perhaps, in deep imaginative power than those of any other land, can claim him for her son; that his birth should have fallen in the later eighteenth century; that Stothard, with his graceful shallowness, should have been the most popular of his brethren, and Flaxman the greatest artist of the day; difficult indeed, for there is nothing in modern art to compare, for original, daring, unreflective energy, with the gesture of the Almighty where he says, "Behold now Behemoth which I made," nothing to equal the rhythmic grace of composition in the group of Job amid his daughters, and nothing to exceed the beauty of the principal figure in "I am young and ye are old." And I think there is no representation of the Omnipotent in any art whatsoever which matches in definiteness joined to supernatural grandeur that vision of Job where he is saying "Then a spirit passed before

my face." It is almost insulting even to contrast a man who could thus feel and speak with a journeyman of art like Doré; but if I do so it is merely to emphasize Blake's peculiar kind of power by setting him against, not those who have been nearest him in ability but the most popular and best-known of those who have worked with subjects similar to his.

I should add, perhaps, that the most remarkable trait in all Blake's art is its entire originality. Of course this has already been implied; but it shows no more in his compositions as such and in the ideas that they express than in the human types he uses. Beautiful as are his figures, they have no flavor of the beauty we can find in any of the schools of earlier days. There is no plagiarism, conscious or unconscious, in his art, and no eclecticism. If any art has ever been the characteristic, uninfluenced outcome of the artist's self, it is surely William Blake's.

IV.

The most interesting question that a study of Blake suggests is the old, old question of the relative importance in graphic

art of matter and manner — imagination and execution — conception and rendering. After reading any sympathetic estimate of Blake it may seem as though imagination were the one important thing. Here is a man who could not paint at all in the true sense of the word and never even attempted it except on the simplest scale. Some of the results we count his best are ugly in color, rude in execution, and even incorrect in line; and his masterpiece is contained on some twenty sheets a few inches square, done in line, and printed in black-and-white. Yet when we speak of the essence of his art and the way it moves us, we quote Michael Angelo's name as the only term of illustration. With such a record as this, what need of technical accomplishment to climb among the high ones of the earth? Is it not a record that upsets all those theories which preach of technical accomplishment as the first and main thing needed for the making of great art?

Yet if we think a moment the conclusion to which we must come will be just the reverse of this. The study of Blake must prove — and prove more forcibly than the study of any other artist good or bad — that

technique, after all, is very nearly the one thing needful, the one thing without which the highest mental gifts are of small profit to the world, small glory to art, small use to other artists. Our first thought, when we see such a work as the "Job" or such single plates as "Death's Door" or the "Glad New Day," is a thought of gratitude that an artist with so great a mind, so strong a gift for pictorial speech, was born. But more and more as we get to know him, to appreciate his marvellous depth of meaning, power of insight, and control of beauty, more and more the thought assails us: What if this great imaginative artist had been a great painter too? And forever after the regret consumes us that he was not given the brush of a Velasquez or a Tintoretto, nay, of a Giulio Romano, even, or a later Bolognese. Even a partially complete training in the use of the brush, even a skill such as those display who stand as third-rate painters, would have made Blake widely famous for all time; while if he had possessed the noblest kind of executive skill it is difficult to say how high he would be placed. It is impossible, to be sure, that any of the names we now rank as first and

greatest would then have outranked his own. I have said that there is nothing extant in art which for power and fitness of conception surpasses the "Job." I have also said that its execution is excellent *in its way*. But consider a moment what the world would own had it been executed in another way. "Such designs," writes Gilchrist of the pictures for Blair's "Grave," "are in motive, spirit, and manner of embodiment without parallel, and enlarge the boundaries of art. Such art ranks with that of the greatest eras, — is of the same sublime reach and pure quality. What signifies it that these drawings cover but a few inches and are executed in water-colors instead of oils or frescoes?" The praise is not a whit too strong, but surely that signifies much which the biographer asserts can signify not at all. The designs are great and wonderful as we have them, but let us fancy them differently displayed. Let us imagine "Death's Door," or the wonderfully beautiful "Meeting of a Family in Heaven," spread before us in great frescoes on a sanctuary wall, or the finest of all the "Job" designs, — "The Sons of God shouted for Joy." We can easily thus

imagine them without a change in line or feature, and no fact could more strongly prove their unsurpassable rightness as pictorial compositions. The "Sons of God" is an absolutely perfect composition in the grandest of all "grand styles." Raphael himself could not improve it in beauty, nor Michael Angelo in expression. Imagine it painted with a Raphael's perfection or with the perfection of some one who in color was still greater than a Raphael. Shall we say with Gilchrist that it matters not *how* Blake has bequeathed it to us?

Having once become possessed by this idea it is difficult to look at the "Job" or at any of Blake's best works and believe that we are seeing the true originals. We have the same sensation we get when studying small prints which are known to be from larger colored originals. We are convinced that we see but a hint of the actual first work; we are eagerly dissatisfied that we cannot see what the artist must have wrought — vast frescoes, cool, clear, stately, and splendid, or great canvases, deep, rich, and glowing, with all the grandeur of tremendous lines and all the force of intensest color. Look once more at the

"Sons of God." The arrangement is on so grand a scale, is, indeed, so architectural, that it seems ludicrous to say it was originally intended for just this little square of paper; and in some of the other designs the chiaroscuro is so sublime that we deny it could have been thus rendered first of all — in tiny rigid lines of black-and-white; we declare these must be merely an engraver's clever transcript from some comprehensive and successful coloristic scheme. Put Blake's prints beside a set from the Sistine ceiling. Imagine these last to be their own originals; think whether the world would be no loser if they were; and then say whether it does not "signify" that Blake was merely an artist of magnificent thought and not likewise a magnificently skilful painter. It signifies just in so far that instead of ranking as he should with Michael Angelo and Signorelli, with Orcagna and Tintoretto, — instead of being one of the great glories of the whole world, he is the beloved of a few connoisseurs, the delight of a few students who are willing to go into the byways of art for treasure — a king among artists but a king without a throne, defrauded forever of his birthright

of influence and fame. It is of no avail to preach about Blake and praise him and call the world blind and stupid because it sees him not. He could have swayed it at his will had he possessed the language of his art. Not possessing it he can only speak, now or ever, to those who so thoroughly understand the artistic tongue, and so keenly love its every syllable, that they will bend their ear to his still small voice, and gather from its often stammering accents the mighty meanings he intends.

IV.

COROT.

1796–1875.

WHAT do we understand by the interest that attaches to an artist's work? First, I think, the interest that may lie in any one of his creations separately judged — in its peculiarities as a piece of beauty, as an interpretation of some aspect of nature or mood of the mind. Then, the larger interest we find when his work is considered as a whole and its revelation of his gifts and methods is thoroughly understood. And finally the interest of the work and the man together as factors in the history of art — as proofs of the development of antecedent tendencies, or types of the general temper of art in their time, or prophets or leaders of the future course of things.

Sometimes an artist who is not very important in himself is extremely important from the historical point of view; but when

one who has produced very fine and individual work has likewise been a potent influence in art at large — then, indeed, his claim upon us is insistent. This is the case with Corot. He was one of the greatest landscape painters who has ever lived, and one of the most influential leaders and teachers that our century has seen.

I.

Jean Baptiste Camille Corot was born in Paris in the year 1796. His father, a native of Rouen, had been a hair-dresser, but, marrying a milliner, transferred his talents to her service, and, in their little shop on the Rue du Bac, gradually amassed a snug bit of a fortune. An artist in his way was this elder Corot, and not deprived of such fame as the Muse of Fashion can bestow — advertised in a popular comedy which held the stage of the *Français* for years. "I have just come from Corot's," cries one of the actors, "but I could not see him. He had retired to his *cabinet* to compose a *bonnet à la Sicilienne*."

Meanwhile Camille was at school in Rouen, where he remained seven years and gained the whole of his education. From

school he went to a cloth-merchant's shop in the Rue de Richelieu, and here eight years were passed. Then his love for art broke through the uncongenial tie. While at Rouen his holidays had been spent with an old friend of his father's in long walks beside the borders of the Seine ; and later the unwilling "dry goods clerk" found solace in summer days at Ville d'Avray where his people had a little country home. A love for nature was thus gradually fostered in a soul which by birth was peculiarly receptive ; and we read of long night-watches at his bedroom window filled with vague poetic musings, visions of nymphs, and aspirations towards some more congenial tool than the yard-stick. Indeed, the brush was soon the yard-stick's rival. An easel was set up in the humble bedroom ; a sketch-book was always in hand out-of-doors ; and lithographic stones and sheets of scribbled paper strewed the merchant's counter, underneath which they retired with Corot during the pause between one customer and the next.

A casual acquaintance with the young painter Michallon brought about the crisis long deferred by Camille's sweet and docile temper. The tale is the old one of loud

parental opposition, but it is not followed by the usual sequel of lasting bitterness. When once convinced that there was nothing else to do, Corot *père* made a rather sharp bargain with his son, but stuck to it ever after in good faith if for many years with no slightest mitigation of its sharpness. "Your sisters' dowries have been promptly paid, and I meant soon to set you at the head of a respectable shop. But if you insist upon painting you will have no capital to dispose of as long as I live. I will make you a pension of fifteen hundred francs. Don't count upon ever having more, but see whether you can pull yourself through with that." And Camille, "much moved," fell upon the neck of the artist in Sicilian caps: "A thousand thanks! It is all I need, and you make me very happy." He too kept his word. For thirty years he lived on his three hundred annual dollars, pulled himself very well through, and was one of the happiest mortals in Paris.

The first day he was free he took easel and brush and set himself down before the first thing he saw, — a view of the *Cité* from a spot near the Pont Royal. "The girls from my father's shop," he said in later life,

"used to run down to the *quai* to see how Monsieur Camille was getting on. There was a Mademoiselle Rose, for instance, who came most often. She is still alive, and is still Miss Rose, and still comes to see me now and then. Last week she was here, and oh, my friends, what a change and what reflections it gave birth to! My picture has not budged. It is as young as ever, and keeps still the hour and the weather when it was done. But Mademoiselle Rose? But I? What are we?"

Michallon taught Corot at first and gave him counsel good for a youngster: To put himself face to face with nature, to try to render it exactly, to paint what he saw, and translate the impression he received. But soon he died, and Corot, seeking help elsewhere, chose Victor Bertin, who had been Michallon's own master. Bertin was a landscape painter of the classic school, worshipping Poussin's mastery of form, but in his own execution cold, measured, mechanical, and hard. He might have taught Corot more and hurt him more had he not been forestalled by the long apprenticeship to nature and an inborn gift. As it was, he taught him two things of priceless value, —

accurate drawing and a sense for "style" in composition.

In 1825 Corot went to Rome, where most of his fellow-artists laughed at his work, but where all of them loved the worker, gay in spirit as he was, with a good voice for a song, and a modest, patient ear for the spoken words of others. Encouragement first came from Aligny who, surprising him at work on a study of the Colosseum, declared that it had qualities of the first value: exactness, skilful treatment, and an air of style. Corot smiled as at the chaffing of a friend; but the friend was an authority in the artist circle at the *Café Grec*, and, repeating there what he had said in private, — protesting that Corot might some day be the master of them all, — the bashful merchant's clerk soon found that his art was respected and his future believed in. Fifty years later, when Aligny's body was brought from Lyons to be re-interred in Paris, Corot was one of the very few who followed it; a "sacred duty," as he said, — the duty of gratitude to his first champion, — bringing him forth in his white hairs under the swirling snow of a bitter winter dawn.

Naples as well as Rome was visited at

this time, and perhaps Venice too. In 1827 Corot returned to France and sent his first picture to the *Salon* exhibition ; and thereafter, until his death in 1875, he was never once absent from its walls. In 1834 he went again to Italy, but got no further than Venice, coming promptly home when his father wrote how much he missed him. In 1842 it was Italy again for some five or six months. In 1847 his father died. During all his later years Corot travelled much in Switzerland and various parts of France, and once he went to England and the Netherlands. In 1874 the widowed sister died with whom he had lived for many years, and his own health broke down. And on the 23d of February, 1875, his spirit passed away.

This is not much to tell of a life which lasted seventy-nine years, but it is all there is to be said about Corot's, except as it was bound up with his art. He never married, for, he said, he had a wife already — a little fairy called Imagination, who came at his call and vanished when he did not need her. He lived chiefly at Ville d'Avray with always a *pied-à-terre* and studio in Paris, and mixed in no society but that of his brother-artists.

II.

In 1833 Corot got a minor medal for one of his exhibited pictures; but almost the first mention of his name that can be traced in print is where Alfred de Musset, writing of the *Salon* of 1836 in the "Revue des Deux Mondes," speaks of "Corot, whose 'Roman Campagna' has its admirers." The next year Gustav Planche praised a "St. Jerome" which now hangs (the gift of Corot) in the little church at Ville d'Avray. In 1846 he was decorated for a "Scene in the Forest of Fontainebleau." In 1855 he received a first-class medal, and in 1867, oddly enough, one of the second class, but accompanied by the higher decoration of the Legion of Honor; and year by year artists and critics were louder in his praise. But the public was long in learning the fact that he even existed, and his father was quite as long in believing that his art was really art. When the first decoration came, "Tell me," he said to one of Corot's comrades, "has Camille actually any talent?" Nothing would convince him that he was "the best of us all;" nevertheless he doubled his pension.

Fifty years old when he thus achieved an income of six hundred dollars, Corot was sixty before any one bought his pictures, save now and then a brother-artist. When the first customer departed with his purchase, "Alas!" he cried in humorous despair, "my collection has been so long complete, and now it is broken!" And when others followed he could hardly believe them serious, or be induced to set prices on his work. "It is worth such and such a sum, but no one will give that, and I will not sell it for less. I can give my things away if I see fit, but I cannot degrade my art by selling them below their value." When he actually dared to price one at ten thousand francs, and heard it had been sold, he was sure he had dropped a zero in marking the figures, and wrote to the *Salon* secretary repeating the sum in written-out words. When a sale of his works was held at the Hotel Drouot in 1858 he accused his friends of friendly cheating because it brought him $2,846; yet there were thirty-eight pictures, and among them five of great importance.

Fortunately, Corot lived long enough to see the prices he thought no one would pay

increased twenty-fold at public sales. A picture he had sold for 700 francs went many years later in the auction-room for 12,000, and Corot "swam in happiness," for, he felt, "it is not I that have changed, but the constancy of my principles that has triumphed." Never, indeed, did artist pursue his own path with a steadier disregard of public praise; and rarely has an artist so persistently neglected lived to enjoy his fame so long. It is a record to set against Millet's for the reviving of faith in the justice of Heaven.

Yet even had Corot died at seventy-nine without seeing a ray of the coming aureole, we can fancy no despairing exit. Material cares never weighed upon him in his bachelorhood, and he had the merry heart that gangs all the way with less discomfort than a sombre spirit finds in the first mile or two. The fact of living and the act of painting were almost enough for him, and the appreciation of a few brother-artists filled his cup. We read of seasons of brief discouragement, and there were tears in his eyes sometimes when he came home from a *Salon* where his pictures were obscurely placed and he had overheard a scoffing phrase. But a look

at his easel soon brought comfort, and the darling children of his hand were there in a "complete collection" to assure him that he had not lived in vain. "It must be confessed," he once exclaimed, "that if painting is a folly it is a sweet one — one that should excite envy, not forgiveness. Study my looks and my health, and I defy any one to find a trace of those cares, ambitions, and remorseful thoughts which ravage the features of so many unfortunate folk. Ought one not to love the art which procures peace and contentment, and even health, to him who knows how to regulate his life?" But just here was Corot's talisman shared, alas, with how few! He knew how to regulate his life, and knew that it meant to live for his painting and to paint for himself.

In his young days he was the liveliest among the lively. Tall of stature and herculean in build, possessed of perfect health, high spirits, and a gentle temper, student balls and studio suppers were his delight, and he was the delight of their frequenters. Yet wherever he was he never failed to disappear for a while at nine o'clock, when *la belle dame*, as he called his mother, awaited

him for a hand at cards. In his old age he was "Papa Corot" to the whole artist world of Paris — no one more respected, more beloved and cherished; no one so ready with a helping hand full of money, a helping tongue full of cheer, and wise advice.

Of book-learning he had little, and his interest in the world outside his art was never very great. He often bought books from the stalls along the *quais*, but merely for the sake of their shape and color. He had an odd superstition that he ought to read "Polyeucte" through, and began it perhaps a score of times; but he never got to the end, and we find no record of attempts with other works. Music, however, he loved with passion and rare intelligence, and nature he adored, understood, and explained with singular felicity of speech. In his walks abroad he wore a long black coat and a high satin stock; in his studio, a blouse, a gay striped cotton night-cap, and invariably a long clay pipe; and with his shock of white hair and smooth-shaven face — where the very wrinkles did but define a smile around the vigorous mouth — we can well believe that he looked at first sight less like a poetical painter than a *roi d'Yvetot* or

a jolly Norman carter. We smile back with pleasure even at his printed portrait, and wish ourselves among the students of Paris as they clustered, charmed, about the clever, wise, benevolent, and brave old man.

There seems to have been no serious cloud upon his life until the fatal year when France was slaughtered. Then he said he should have gone mad had he not had the refuge of his easel. It was not only wrong but stupid — *bête* I must write, the French word means so much more — to kill people and destroy the face of nature and the works of man. "Compare the savage hate of war with art, which at the bottom means simply love!" Yet with the instinct of a patriot he came back to Paris when the siege seemed certain, and gave with a very generous hand not only to relieve the sick but "to drive the Prussians out of the woods of Ville d'Avray." His brush and his summer memories filled part of his time, and the rest was spent among the poor and suffering. During the whole siege he ministered and worked, and some of his loveliest pictures date from these dreary weeks.

When they were shown in 1874 he nar-

rowly missed, for the second time, the grand medal of honor. But a better reward came to him in a letter from a group of artists saying that after all "the greatest honor is to be called Corot." And soon after the same impulse found still more emphatic expression. A gold medal was subscribed for by a long list of artists and amateurs and presented to the venerable master. The state never had a chance to retrieve its error. This was the year when Corot's sister died, and when her death proved the beginning of his own. The day when the medal was given him at a big banquet in the Grand Hotel, when he read its inscription, "To Corot, his brethren and admirers," and could only whisper through deep emotion, "It makes one very happy to be loved like this" (*loved*, let me emphasize the characteristic word) — this was the last day he was seen in public, and even then he was nervous, ill, and feeble.

Dropsy was the final stage of his disease and he foresaw the fatal end. "I am almost resigned," he said to his pupil Français, watching by his bed, "but it is not easy, and I have been a long time getting to the point. Yet I have no reason to complain

of my fate — far otherwise. I have had good health for seventy-eight years, and have been able to do nothing but paint for fifty. My family were honest folk. I have had good friends, and think I never did harm to any one. My lot in life has been excellent. Far from reproaching fate I can only be grateful. I must go — I know it; but don't want to believe it. In spite of myself there is a little bit of hope left in me." The next day he asked for a priest, saying his father had done so, and he wished to die like his father. But his last thought was for his art. His feeble fingers believed they held a brush, and he exclaimed, "See how beautiful it is! I have never seen such beautiful landscapes." And then he died.

At his funeral the great church was more than full, and the crowd spread through the streets outside. Faure sang his requiem to an air Corot had himself selected — the slow movement from Beethoven's seventh symphony. And by the open grave M. de Chennevières, Director of the *Beaux Arts*, spoke about him in touching words: "All the youth of Paris loved him, for he loved youth, and his talent was youth eternally new. . . . And in his immortal works he

praised God in His skies and birds and trees."

As the last phrase was spoken, we are told, a linnet perched on a branch near by and burst into a gush of song; and when in 1880 a monument to the beloved great painter who talked so often of "*mes feuilles et mes petits oiseaux*" was set up by his brethren on the border of the little lake at Ville d'Avray, the sculptor carved upon it the branch and the singing bird.

III.

Every one knows that Corot was a landscape painter with an especial love for the neighborhoods of Ville d'Avray and for effects of springtime foliage and early morning or evening light. But it is a great mistake to think of him as confined to such effects or even as narrowly devoted to landscape painting. He painted all hours of the day, and now and then moonlight too; and all seasons of the year save those when snow lies on the ground. Figures enliven nearly all his landscapes. Sometimes they are peasants laboring in wood or field; more often classic nymphs or dancers in surroundings that reveal his memories of

southern scenes; and occasionally the characters of some antique fable. Twice, for instance, Corot painted Orpheus, and once Silenus, Diana at the bath, Homer with a group of shepherds, Democritus, Daphne and Chloe, Biblis, and Virgil serving as a guide to Dante. Sacred history likewise attracted him. Nothing he produced is more remarkable than the "St. Sebastian" now in Baltimore; and he often drew upon the life of Christ and the stories of the Old Testament. He also painted flowers, and still-life subjects and interiors; many streets and distant city views; animals; large draped figures and studies of the nude, and no less than forty portraits. Mural decoration he essayed whenever he got the chance — which was by no means so often as he wished. In his later years he etched some delightfully characteristic plates; and whoever glanced through his sketch-book or his letters saw that nothing which had met his eye had appealed to his hand in vain.

But the grossest misconception with regard to Corot is not the one which ignores his width of range. It is a much more serious mistake to believe that because he "idealized" Nature he did not represent her

faithfully, because he suppressed details he did not see or could not render them, because his maturer work looks "very free" he had not studied conscientiously. Nothing so afflicts a real student of Corot as to hear him called an exponent of superficiality or "dash."

If ever a man worked hard at his art it was Corot. The number of his preparatory studies was immense, and they were made in his latest as well as his earliest years. "Conscience" was his watchword, the nickname his scholars gave him, the one recipe he gave them when they asked him how to learn to paint. The first things to produce, he said, were "studies in submission;" later came the time for studies in picture-making. He did not approve of academies and schools, and deemed it enough to study the old masters with the eye, without much attempt at actual copying. He thought the great school of Nature might suffice to form soul and sight and hand; but this school one should never desert and could not frequent too diligently. It is true, as a friend once said, that what Corot wanted to paint was "not so much Nature as his love for her." But to love

her meant to peruse her with patient care, to know her well and fully; and to paint his love meant not to alter her charm but to bring into clear relief those elements therein which most appealed to him. Individuality in art no man prized more highly; but he defined it as "the individual expression of a truth," and said that to develop it one must work "with an ardor that knows no concessions." His whole life was given up to work, and his whole work was an effort to see Nature with more and more distinctness, and to render her with more and more fidelity. A gray-haired man, a master among his fellows, a poet before the world, he was to the end a child at the Great Mother's knee; and to the end a conscientious, often a despairing, aspirant when he had a brush in hand.

No one can doubt Corot's accurate vision and patient labor who has seen his earlier pictures. Certain of his noblest qualities appear in them all — his care for harmony in composition and for dignity and grace of line, his belief that the whole is of more importance than any one part, and his desire to speak from a personal point of view. But

there is none of the breadth, freedom, synthesis, which characterize his later works. Conscientiousness is apparent as well as real; details are carefully expressed, and the touch is dry, slow, and not a little heavy. Even the splendid "Forest of Fontainebleau," which was painted in 1846 and won the cross of the Legion of Honor, might not be recognized as a Corot by superficial students of those later pictures with which in this country we are more familiar. But a wiser critic would feel sure that an "early Corot" must be pretty much what we find it: he would know that truth cannot be based on ignorance, and that knowledge cannot be acquired except through patient labor.

Corot's aim was always to simplify expression, to disengage the thing he wished to say — the main idea and meaning, the picture he had in mind — from the thousand minor pictures and ideas that had been wound up with it in Nature. As he lived and labored his power to do this increased. When he retouched an early canvas he never added anything; improvement always meant suppression — some broadening, simplifying touch. But the fact is a proof of growing knowledge, not of waning interest

in truth. What he wanted to repeat were not Nature's statistics, but their sum total; not her minutiæ, but the result she had wrought with them; not the elements with which she had built up a landscape, but the landscape itself as his eye had embraced and his soul had felt it. This he wanted to paint, and this he did paint with extraordinary truth as well as charm and individuality. But can any superficial brush do this? Can any one know the things to say without knowing the things to omit, build up broad truths in ignorance of the minor truths which compose them, reproduce an impression without remembering what elements had worked together to create it, and which had been of preponderant, controlling value?

No; the real lesson taught by Corot's pictures and Corot's life is that breadth in painting (if it is not meaningless and empty) must repose on accurate knowledge; that freedom (if it is not mere idle license) must have its basis in fidelity to facts; that feeling must be guided by reason and self-restraint. Corot's knowledge of natural facts — within the cycle of such scenes as he preferred to paint — was greater probably than

that of any painter who has ever lived except Théodore Rousseau; and the loving patience of his efforts to express it has never been surpassed. These are the reasons why he could permit himself to be the most free and personal and poetic of all landscape painters.

IV.

"Truth," said Corot, "is the first thing in art and the second and the third." But the whole truth cannot be told at once. A selection from the mass of Nature's truths is what the artist shows — a few things at a time, and with sufficient emphasis to make them clearly felt. You cannot paint summer and winter on a single canvas. No two successive hours of a summer's day are just alike, and you cannot paint them both. Nor, as certainly, can you paint everything you see at the chosen moment. Crowd in too much and you spoil the picture, weaken the impression, conceal your meaning, falsify everything in the attempt to be too true.

This was Corot's creed. What now were the truths that he interpreted at the necessary sacrifice of others which were less important in his eyes? They are implied, I think, in the words I have already written.

Corot prized effects rather than what the non-artistic world calls solid facts. But effects are as truly facts as are the individual features and details which make them. Indeed, they are the most essential as well as interesting of all facts. It is effects that we see first when we are in Nature's presence, that impress us most, and dwell the longest in our minds. Outlines, modelling, local colors, minor details — these shift, appear and disappear, or alter vastly as light and shadow change; and most of them we never really see at all until we take time to analyze. Look at the same scene on a sunny morning or by cloudy sunset light. It is not the same scene. The features are the same, but their effect has changed, and this means a new landscape, a novel picture. The mistake of too many modern painters, especially in England, is that they paint from analysis, not from sight. They paint the things they know are there, not the things they perceive just as they perceive them. This Corot never did. He studied analytically and learned all he could about solid facts; but he painted synthetically — omitting many things that he knew about, and even many that he saw at the

moment, in order to portray more clearly the general result. And this general result he found in the main lines of the scene before him; in its dominant tone; in the broad relationships of one mass of color to all others; in the aspect of the sky, the character of the atmosphere, and the play of light; and in the palpitating incessant movement of sky and air and leaf.

Look at one of Corot's foregrounds and you will see whether it is soft or hard, wet with dew or dry in the sun; you will see its color, its mobility. Look at his trees and you will see their mass, their diversities in denseness, their pliability and vital freshness. Look at his sky and you will see its shimmering, pulsating quality: it has the softness of a blue which means vast depths of distance, or of a gray which means layer upon layer of imponderable mist, and the whiteness of clouds which shine as bright as pearls but would dissipate at a touch. And everywhere, over all, behind all, in all, you will see the enveloping air and the light which infiltrates this thing and transfigures that; the air and the light which make all things what they are, which create the landscape by creating its

color, its expression, its effect; the air and the light which are the movement, the spirit, the very essence of nature. No man had ever perfectly painted the atmosphere till Corot did it, or the diffused, pervading quality of light; and for this reason no one had painted such delicate, infinite distances, such deep, luminous, palpitating skies.

See now how Corot managed to paint like this — to interpret the life, mood, and meaning of the scene he drew. It was just through that process of omission and suppression which the superficial misread as proof that he did not really "render" nature at all. Even the smallest, simplest, natural fact cannot be "rendered" in the sense of being literally reproduced; and to attempt the literal imitation of large features is merely to sacrifice the whole in favor of what must remain but a partial rendering of a part. A leaf can be painted, but not a myriad leaves at once; we are soon forced to generalize, condense, suppress; and to try to paint too many leaves is to lose the tree, for the tree is not a congregation of countless individual leaves distinctly seen — it is a mass of leaves which are shot through and through with

light and air, and always more or less merged together and moving. It is an entity, and a live one; and which is the more important — that we should see the living thing or the items that compose it? What we ask the painter is not just how his tree was constructed, but just how it looked as a feature in the beauty and aliveness of the scene. What we want is its general effect and the way it harmonized with the effect of its surroundings.

Does it matter, then, if he omits many things, or even if he alters some things, to get this right result? Such altering is not falsifying. It is merely emphasis — a stress laid here and a blank left there that (since all facts cannot possibly be given) the accented fact shall at least be plain. The generalized structure of Corot's trees, their blurred contours and flying, feathery spray — these are not untruths. They are merely compromises with the stern necessities of paint, devices he employed, not because he was unable to draw trees with precision, but because, had he done this, his foliage would have been too solid and inert for truth. A twig is never long in one position. It cannot be painted in two positions at

once. But a twig that is blurred to the eye because it is passing from one position to another — this can be painted, and this Corot preferred to paint rather than ramifications with exactness or leaf-outlines with a narrow care. So his trees are alive, and, as he loved to say, the light can reach their inmost leaves, and the little birds can fly among their branches.

It is the same thing with color. The color schemes to which Corot kept were never as strong and vivid as those we find with some of his contemporaries and many of his successors. Browns and grays and pale greens predominate on his canvas with rarely an acuter accent, a louder note. But he fitted his themes to his brush, so that we feel no lack; or, in better words, he chose his color schemes in accordance with the character of the natural effects that he loved most. And within the scale he chose his coloring is perfect. His tone (the harmony, or, as used to be said, the "keeping" of his result) is admirable beyond praise. Yet it is gained at no sacrifice of truth in local color. There are cheap processes for securing tone, which are indeed falsifications of nature, — ways of carrying over

into one object the color of another, throwing things out of their right relationships, harmonizing with some universal gauze of brown or gray. But Corot's was not a process like any of these. His power to harmonize and unify his colors sprang from the fact that he studied colors with a more careful and penetrating eye than ever before had been brought to bear, and never forgot their mutual relationships. Look at one of his pictures where the general effect, perhaps, is of soft delicious greens. Everything in it is not greenish. The sky is pure blue and the clouds are purest white. The water is rightly related to the sky, and where things were gray in nature, or brown, or even black, they are so on canvas. Harmony does not mean monotony, tone does not mean untruth; and this Corot could accomplish because he studied "values" as no painter before him had studied them.

This word — new in our language but indispensable — has been a little hard of comprehension to those who know nothing of the painter's problems and devices. But it means, as simply as I can say it, the difference between given colors as severally compared with the highest note in the

scale — white, and the lowest — black; the difference between them as containing, so to speak, more light or more dark. This does not mean the same thing as the relative degrees of illumination and shadow which may fall upon them. The one quality may be involved in or dependent upon the other, but the two are distinct to the painter's eye.

It is not easy even to perceive differences in value. Given two shades of the same tint, as of a blue-green or a yellow-green, it is easy enough to say which is the darker; but it is more difficult when a yellow-green is compared with a blue-green, and still more when we set a brown beside a green, or a blue beside a yellow. Yet the painter must not only learn to see values in nature but to transpose them correctly on canvas — for color can never be exactly copied on canvas; from the nature of paint, there must always be transposition, adaptation, compromise. Corot mastered the difficulty as no one else had done; and this mastery has made him the guide and teacher of all the landscape painters who have since been born.[1]

[1] A conspicuous example of what is meant by the falsi-

V.

"There are four things for a painter," Corot was wont to say. "These are: form, which he gets through drawing; color, which results from truth to values; sentiment, which is born of the received impression; and finally the execution, the rendering of the whole. As to myself, I think I have sentiment; that is, a little poetry in the soul which leads me to see, or to complete what I see, in a certain way. But I have not always color, and I possess only imperfect elements of the power to draw. In execution I also fail sometimes — which is the reason why I labor harder than ever, little though some people may imagine it."

In accepting these words about himself, we must make allowance for that spirit of aspiration which always leads a true artist

fication of values may be seen in photographs taken by any of the usual processes. Chemical action deals differently with different colors, so that a light yellow, for instance, comes out darker than a dark blue. The trouble has been obviated in some of the newer photographic methods. But it is easy to see that the question of values is of vast importance in all translations from color into black and white. In nothing has the success of American wood-engravers been more remarkable than in their dealing with values.

to remember his ideal as better than the best possible rendering. It is natural that Corot should have thought he often failed to get his values right, although the world gradually saw that he had at least come nearer right than any one before him; and of course he knew that he had not even attempted many schemes and scales of color which he perceived in the actual world. As regards his power to draw he spoke with stricter verity. A lifetime of study in the woods and fields had enabled him to draw landscapes fully and exactly when he chose, and some of his portrait-heads are wonderfully true. But in our modern world schools alone can give scientific knowledge of the figure; and for the lack of this, Corot's figures are weak in anatomy and loose in modelling, though often most delightful in color and sentiment.

It is the same with his execution. Born at a time when few painters painted really well, and trained almost wholly by his own efforts, he is not one of the supreme masters of the brush — one of those whose every line and touch delights the connoisseur in handling. But he painted well enough to express with charm as well as clearness the

impressions he received; and as these were the impressions of a very great and individual artist, the verdict is still a high one. Had his growth been assisted by stronger outside influences he would doubtless have reached technical skill more quickly, and, perhaps, conquered it more completely; but something of the personality of his manner might have perished. So we are content with his technical shortcomings, and, after all, they are far from serious. Although a few men have painted landscapes still more beautifully, Corot's surely satisfy the eye while delighting and moving the soul.

If but a single phrase of Corot's had been recorded, I should wish it the one which says that sentiment in art is a poetic power to see things or *to complete* them in some personal way. Here the whole import of idealism in art lies crystallized in a word. Not to depart from Nature, but to complete her is the true idealization; not to conceive an ideal foreign to her own, but to perceive her own with so much sympathy that it can be more perfectly revealed than, on this imperfect earth, she herself is often able to reveal it; not to be untrue to fact, but to choose and arrange particular facts so that

the type, the ideal, toward which they tend shall be most clearly shown.

The whole world prizes such work as this when it is the poet's or even the figure-painter's. Why is it so often disallowed when the landscape painter brings it? A drama of Shakespeare's never happened, yet we feel it is truer than any literally reported drama of the police-court, or "realistic" stage-play or novel. The character of a man, we know, is a higher fact than any of his daily deeds; why, then, is not the aspect of a landscape a higher fact than any of its details? More significant than any individual character, again, is the essence of human nature; why, then, does not the essence of some kind or type of natural beauty mean more and purer truth than the aspect of any one actual spot? Must not an artist see broadly, synthetically, if he is to show us general aspects? and must he not see imaginatively, poetically — must he not "complete" what he sees — if he is to search out and render the ideal therein suggested? All his interpretations must be based on facts which he has observed in this place or that; but to make a good picture and a true one he need not

confine himself to facts which he has chanced to see together. Very likely Corot never painted a scene without omitting some features and adding others; and in more than one of his works there are elements both of French and of Italian origin. But there is never disharmony in the result, for his knowledge was too great and his imagination too artistic — which means too logical and too sympathetic. He made no mere patchwork pictures. He created landscapes of his own out of the elements with which, in Nature's presence, he had stored his sketch-books and his memory. He might alter a scene — he did not alter Nature. He but completed the beautiful message she had been suggesting here and half-revealing there.

It is easy to prove that Corot's painted poetry was true — much truer than the realist's painted prose. We have only to consult our own experience with him as an interpreter of nature. Here and there, at home or abroad, we may recognize some scene which some realist has faithfully portrayed; but Corot's scenes are everywhere — by the little lakes and brooks of France, in the forest glens of Italy, in the misty

glades of England, and along the river borders of our own far western world. What he painted were not items from nature but certain broad beauties and moods of nature; and though we may rarely be able to put a finger on documentary proof of his veracity, we carry it about with us in a new sensitiveness of eye, a new receptiveness of mood. Everywhere, I say, we see from time to time some beautiful living Corot; but should we see it so quickly or would it seem so beautiful had he not taught us how to value it? The commonplace painter shows us things that we had seen and felt in the same way ourselves. The true artist selects more delicate yet more general facts, explains them with poetic stress, shows us things which probably we had not remarked before, and makes them forever ours. We may never possess a picture by Corot, but how immeasurably poorer we should be had he painted none! His message is our own if his canvases are not; and who shall say this of a painter unless he is as true as truth, yet personal, poetical, in that creative way which alone means the highest art?

The special character of Corot's idealism

shows first of all in his choice of subject-matter. He was most attracted by the most idyllic scenes and moods of nature. Grandeur, force, terror, sadness, did not appeal to him. He had no taste for storms and rugged wildness; he loved high noon less than the glinting tender prophecies of morn or the mysterious grace of twilight; and if it was high noon he painted, still it was not prosaic clearness, but noon in a day of soft veiling mists and passing gleams and shadows. The peculiar broad softness of his touch — a softness which lacks neither delicacy nor nerve — fits well with the sentiment of these favorite themes. But to keep feeling and execution of this sort above mere sentimentality and vagueness, a painter needs the great gift of style. This gift Corot had in a very high degree — the power to give his pictures a quality which every one will understand when I call it classic. No one could be more thoroughly modern, more thoroughly Gallic, than Corot; but no one in modern art has been more classic in the fundamental meaning of the word. It was not because he often painted classic subjects — how many have done this and given us a breath from

English firesides, a blast from the Parisian boulevard, in pictures, which have, perhaps, all other virtues but are conspicuously devoid of style! It was because he felt things with Greek simplicity, joy, and freshness, and saw them in a way which meant Greek dignity, harmony, and repose, and a real yet ideal grace. If his figures are often dreams of Hellas it was simply because he saw the landscape he was painting in such a way that it could be most fittingly peopled thus. The idyllic, classic note was in the voice of the man, and would have rung out in his work whatever the themes he chose. It must have been his by birth, though it was happily fostered by the course of his student years. From Bertin and Aligny he imbibed sobriety in taste, and that love for harmonious composition which more than any other single element means style in painting; and his long Italian months had enforced the lesson, showing him broad reposeful tones as well as lines. Yet had he not already dreamed of nymphs and fountains in his boyhood by the window at Ville d'Avray?

VI.

If we can fix upon any one of Corot's pictures as the most famous it must be, I think, the "St. Sebastian" owned by Mr. Walters in Baltimore. Painted in 1851 it admirably represents Corot's art in that middle period which French critics have held to be his very best. His individuality had then fully developed, — both his poetry in conception and his freedom in treatment; the difference from the "Forest of Fontainebleau," which he had painted only five years earlier, is immense. Yet a little of his early reserve of manner still clings about the "St. Sebastian," giving it more massiveness and grandeur than we find in pictures of a much later date. It seems to have been Corot's favorite work. He would never sell it, but in 1871 gave it to the lottery held for the benefit of the wounded defenders of France. Delacroix called it the most truly religious picture of modern times; and, indeed, to great external charm and purest poetry it adds a marvellous depth and solemnity of mood. It is the least idyllic, the most epic in sentiment, of all Corot's great works, yet instinct with a

pathetic tenderness. The dying saint lies on the ground, cared for by two holy women, in a shadowy forest glen. On either side rise enormous trees, and, between them, in far perspective, a little hill with horsemen silhouetted against the sky. Two baby angels float high above the saint bearing the palms of martyrdom. The hour is twilight, and the shadows are dense beneath the trees; but there is a glad radiance still in the wonderful sky and the very breath of living nature in the atmosphere.

Not so grand, not so impressive, but still more beautiful, perhaps, is another work of this middle period, — the "Orpheus Greeting the Morn," owned by Mr. Cottier in New York, — another famous Corot and another that well deserves its fame. The upright shape of the large canvas (seen likewise in the "St. Sebastian") is characteristic of Corot, who loved a composition in which the dignity of vertical lines might be emphasized. In no picture is the very essence of morning more truthfully, exquisitely, portrayed: we are bathed in its air, steeped in its light; our ears are filled with the soft rustle of its wakening leaves; our souls are thrilled with its fresh and tender

promise; and the infinite lovely distance draws us till we share the passionate poetic yearning of Orpheus himself. And in the execution what breadth combined with delicacy, what soft yet radiant color, what a sense of freedom, sincerity, inspiration! and what a delicious golden tone to compare with the darker yet silvery tone of the "St. Sebastian"! This, indeed, is the poetry of art — nature's poetry truthfully reported, yet accented, explained, "completed" by a great artist's soul and sight and touch.

The "Orpheus" was painted in 1861, and in 1866 the splendid "Danse des Amours," which is also in New York, owned by Mr. Charles A. Dana, — a surpassingly fine example of one of Corot's most characteristic themes. We need not ask whether this wood is of France or Italy, whether this little temple and these gracious, buoyant figures were painted from fact or fancy. It is the true ideal world — the world of actual nature but seen in one of its most beautiful aspects, peopled by joyous figures, and with all its fair suggestions amplified and fulfilled.

The "Dante and Virgil" in the Boston

Museum of Fine Arts is much less complete and magnificent than these, and it shows too clearly Corot's shortcomings as a draughtsman; — the tigers crouching at the poet's feet were sketched in by Barye, but his outlines were lost in the painting. Nevertheless, the work is admirable as a whole and most interesting in sentiment — more strongly dramatic than any other Corot I have seen. Seldom has Dante been shown so nearly as he must have looked when, as the Florentine children said, he went down into hell.

The "Wood-Gatherers" of the Corcoran Gallery in Washington is one of Corot's very latest works, shown at the last *Salon* held before his death. The tone is brown and rather dark and the handling very summary; but it has great strength and dignity, and impressive sentiment. In default of an "Orpheus," it is an excellent Corot for the American public to possess.

Thus, it appears, there are Corots in America of the very highest quality; and, indeed, this list of them might be greatly lengthened. Mr. Jay Gould in New York owns a "Danse des Nymphes" only less admirable than the "Danse des Amours." In

the collection of Mr. Quincy Shaw at Brookline, Massachusetts, are several perfect examples, representing different epochs from almost the very earliest; and in a hundred other American galleries hang Corots of more or less distinction. With the best, of course, there are many not so good, and others, alas, which are Corots only in name. A superficial eye is easily deceived by imitations of Corot's slighter works, and such have been foisted on the public, abroad as well as here, in considerable numbers. But a really fine Corot has qualities beyond the reach of any plagiarist — qualities of truth on the one hand, of feeling on the other. We run no risk of seeing a fictitious "St. Sebastian," or a "Danse des Amours" which shall deceive a true lover of Corot.

VII.

To understand Corot's influence on art and artists we must recall the times when his work began.

The formalizing, pseudo-classic tendencies of the school of David had just lost their sovereignty. The "romantic" reaction was in its lusty youth under the leadership of

Géricault and Delacroix. The fetters of academic tradition were loosened; freedom in thought and practice was proclaimed for every painter; the modern spirit of inquiry and inventiveness, the modern gospel of individuality, were daily winning new disciples. Oddly enough, as it now seems to us, the first fresh impulse in the field of landscape came from across the Channel — certain pictures by Constable and Bonington, exhibited in Paris, gave the first hint that landscape, too, might be painted in free and varied fashions, and made the medium for expressing simple local beauties and personal ideas. But the fact is easily explained: in France landscape painting had meant for generations nothing but a memory of Claude and Poussin, while in England the old Dutch masters — so much more simple, naïve, yet modern in their feeling — had never been lost to sight. Now the hint from England led Frenchmen back to the art of Holland, and its fructifying influence soon showed in France as it has never yet shown in England. Almost instantly a new school was born, a new development began — a school and a development which we must call the noblest and completest that modern painting counts.

Georges Michel was one of the very first to feel the new impulse. But he seems a survivor of the old Dutch school rather than a leader in the school of France, a weaker brother of Ruysdael, not his modernized descendant, a forerunner, not a fellow, of Rousseau, Corot, Troyon, Millet, and Dupré. Paul Huet was another innovator, but he is better known to us by the influence he had in his time than by his actual work. Rousseau was the first of the really complete new masters in landscape, and almost on a line with Rousseau stands Corot.

It is difficult to say just in how far Corot was formed by this influence or by that. Bonington's spirit seems very near akin to his — Mr. Henry Adams in Washington owns a little Bonington which might almost pass for a comparatively early Corot. But there can be no question as of teacher and scholar in the case. Corot can have had no more than a mere glimpse of Bonington's work, and his own was at once immeasurably wider, deeper, and more subtile. For Rousseau he had an immense admiration ; but their natures were wholly unlike, and the longer they lived the further apart grew the lines on which they labored. We can

say no more of Corot than that the hint of naturalism he got from England, the draught of classicism he imbibed from his first teachers and from the air of Italy, and the Dutch lesson of simplicity and sobriety, germinated and grew together in his soul while eye and hand were training themselves outdoors.

It is impossible, again, to attempt any weighing of the intrinsic merits of Corot and his great contemporaries. Odious in most connections, a process of definite comparison is nowhere so detestable as when applied to mighty artists. It is a sin against the first law of computation we were taught at school — it is an effort to reckon with unrelated quantities. It is as though we took an apple from a pile of peaches and declared the number of peaches less, or compared an apple with a fig to explain its rank among apples, or gauged the breadth of one stream by the depth of another. We may like best the peach or the fig or the apple, and confidently declare our liking. But when it comes to comparisons, they should be of figs with figs, of Corots with Corots. To be an artist means to be individual; and individuality can be tested

only by its own standard. A Corot is none the worse whatever Rousseau or Troyon may have painted; and it would be none the better had its creator been the only man who ever painted landscapes.

But from the historical stand-point the case is different. If we may not rightly ask of two great contemporaries which was the greater, we may very rightly ask which was the more typical of his time, the more influential upon the world of art. From this point of view Corot seems to me the most significant figure in his generation. Personal, individual, as were all his brethren, boldly, beautifully, as they all preached the gospel of freedom and freshness in art, none except Millet was quite so personal, none quite so fresh, as Corot; and to an individuality as strong as Millet's he added other qualities all his own. No art of the time is so complex as Corot's, and its complexity gives it peculiar value to those who look deeper than the surface of paint. No one departed further from that mock classicism which means academic formality, bloodless self-suppression; yet no one then alive or now alive has done so much to prove the persistent value of true classicism.

David tried for the form of ancient art and missed its spirit. Corot, the great apostle of modernness and personality, caught its spirit while casting utterly away its form. A Greek of the time of Pericles might easily prefer his paintings to any others we could show him: yet how thoroughly French they are; and yet, again, how close they lie to the heart of the American of to-day.

There is still another point in Corot's supremacy. The profound and accurate study of values — the knowledge how to keep tone perfect and yet keep color complete and true — is the greatest technical achievement of modern times. Here Corot led all his rivals, and therefore he has become the leader and teacher of all younger painters. In many ways they have carried his lesson further than he went himself. To paint things truthfully in the open air means to-day tasks of a variety and difficulty which Corot never essayed, results of a vividness and splendor he never achieved. But the whole development rests on his own. He was the first great "impressionist," and the modern impressionists are but his more daring sons. Sometimes we

— and perhaps they themselves — forget the fact; for there is one great point of difference between him and most of his sons in art. He was a poet on canvas, and most of them are speakers of prose. It is their fashion to rave about "realism," to despise idealism — to exalt the mere facts they chance to see above the greater fact which Corot divined and gave. But do what they will, the best among them are more idealistic than they think; and, say what they will, the world will never agree to rank the reporter above the poet. For the great body of lovers and students of art Corot's highest merit is that he was the most poetic soul among those who have ever painted landscapes; and his chief value as a teacher is that he showed so well what poetry in painting means. Too many have thought it meant the effort to do with color the same thing that a writer does with words, and have lost the picture in the effort to paint a poem. But with Corot the picture is the first consideration: beautiful forms, beautiful tones, beautiful expression with the brush. The poetry is an infusion merely, an intangible essence breathed from the soul of the maker. Per-

haps the time will come when Corot's teaching as regards this point will be more generally heeded than it is to-day. But, of course, conscious effort cannot determine the fact. Any painter can learn much from Corot in the way of technical secrets; no one can learn from him how to idealize nature except a man who, like himself, chances to be born with a poet's heart. We can do no more than hope that all new poets who may be born to paint shall be souls of Corot's sort. But we must indeed hope this; for what the world needs just now are not mournful temperaments, reading into nature the sorrow of the human race, but apostles of the joy and peace which those who seek can always find in her; valiant yet tender singers like Corot, like Luca and Correggio, and like Blake when at his best — happy singers of a "glad new day."

VIII.

The more we study Corot's art the more we love the man who stands behind it; and I have dwelt at some length on the record of his life because it completes the revela-

tion of a strong and serious will, of perseverance, modesty, and self-reliance, of noble desires, unfailing courage, sincerity, and loving-kindness.

It is a little the fashion nowadays to think of artists as excusing themselves, on the strength of being artists, from the duties and virtues we demand of commoner clay. It is too much our way to think of them as eccentric, egotistic, nervously excitable or morbidly sensitive, at odds with a prosaic world and often at odds with themselves — pushed one way by the artistic impulse, pulled another by mere human loves and obligations. We think too often of them thus, to pardon or condemn them according as we value art or care little for it as a factor in the progress and aspiration of the world.

Corot's story is of priceless value as proving how far wrong are these ideas; and all the more because it is not an exceptional story. Men like Corot, in all the essentials of what even a pharisaical world would call good conduct, have never been rare among artists and are not rare to-day; nor men as courageous and persevering in disappointment, as simple, modest, and laborious in

success. As was Corot, so, in a more or less marked degree, were almost all the great painters and sculptors of his great time. Not all of them could be so cheery and happy, but most of them were as single-minded in their devotion to art, as generous and sincere in their dealings with their fellows.

Let me make a good ending now with a few more words from Corot's lips: "Do we know how to render the sky, a tree, or water? No; we can only try to give its appearance, try to translate it by an artifice which we must always seek to perfect. For this reason, although I do not know my craft so very badly, I am always trying to go further. Sometimes some one says: 'You know your business and don't need to study more.' But none of that, I say; we always need to learn. . . . Try to conquer the qualities you do not possess, but above all obey your own instinct, your own way of seeing. This is what I call conscience and sincerity. Do not trouble yourself about anything else, and you will have a good chance of being happy and of doing well."

V.

GEORGE FULLER.

1822–1884.

On the walls of the National Academy of Design in the spring of 1878 there hung a small picture called "A Turkey Pasture in Kentucky." Simple in theme, sober in tone, telling no story, and making no daring technical appeal to notice, it was yet remarked by the popular eye and was called by all sensitive observers the most interesting picture of the year. Who, we very soon began to ask, is this Mr. Fuller whose name is so unfamiliar, whose work is so original and charming — who seems to be making his first appearance yet is already a master in his way? If he is a newcomer from abroad he bears the trade-mark neither of Paris nor of Munich; and if he is a product of home education he shows even less affinity with the traditions of our elder schools. Where does he come from

that he has learned to paint in so peculiar yet so fine a way?

Glancing at the Catalogue we found that George Fuller was in no sense a "new man," but an artist past middle age, who since 1857 had stood on the Associate list of the Academy itself. Then we asked, Where has he kept himself aloof during so many years that he comes back now a stranger — where, and why, and how employed? The answer which may be read in a brief sketch of his life is doubly interesting, because it reveals a temper that is exceptional in the history of art, whether the records we search are those of our own land or another.

I.

George Fuller was born of Puritan stock at Deerfield, Massachusetts, in the year 1822. An instinct for art had already shown itself in several members of his family, and from childhood his own tastes led him towards a painter's brush and palette. At the age of fourteen he went to Illinois with a party of railroad builders, and remained two years, being much in the company of the sculptor Henry Kirke Brown. Between the ages of

sixteen and twenty he was again at Deerfield, following a school course but making constant essays in painting, chiefly in the way of portraiture. In 1842 he wrote for counsel to Mr. Brown, then established in Albany, and gladly accepted the sculptor's invitation to go there and study under his tuition. At Albany he remained nearly a year when Mr. Brown went to Europe and Fuller to Boston, where, painting portraits as before, he devoted himself also to the study of such works of art as the city then contained — especially the pictures of Stuart, Allston, and Alexander. A few years later he removed to New York, and, at an age when most painters have finished their student course, went diligently to work in the life-class of the Academy. His first public success seems to have been gained in 1857, when he was already thirty-five years old. He then exhibited a portrait of his earliest friend in art, Mr. Brown, and on the strength of its good qualities was elected an Associate of the National Academy.

It is curious to read the names of those who were at this time Mr. Fuller's friends and fellow-workers, and to remember that

now we think of him as standing side by side with the most successful of our younger painters. H. K. Brown, the two Cheneys, Henry Peters Gray, Quincy Ward, Sandford Gifford, Daniel Huntington — these were among his most constant companions; yet after 1878 the fact that his name was followed by the letters A. N. A. seemed less characteristic than that it should stand on the member-list of the young "Society of American Artists."

Soon after his removal to New York Fuller spent three winters at the south, making studies of negro life, some of which were utilized in his later work. Then he passed a year in Philadelphia, and then went for the first time to Europe, not to study in any academy, but to learn from nature and from the treasures of earlier days in London, Paris, Amsterdam, Florence, Rome, and Sicily. In 1860 he returned to America but not to the public practice of his art. Dissatisfied with his efforts and filled with visions and ideals peculiar to himself, he seems to have felt that if he was ever to work his way to right performance it would be through his own strength and not through help from patron, school, or fellow-craftsman.

He shut himself up in his Deerfield home, took seriously to farming, and abandoned the world of exhibitions, of artists, and of critics. He was invisible for many years, — almost forgotten, save by a few old associates in whose minds still lingered the promise of his early work. The proof that he had not ceased to cultivate art while compelling nature to his needs with the plough was not shown until 1876, when some friends who had penetrated the Deerfield studio persuaded him to exhibit in Boston fourteen pictures of various kinds. These at once gained him local fame and favor; and two years later he appeared again on the walls of the New York Academy after so long an absence that he came as a stranger and an aspirant, his place to be won afresh, his success dependent on the suffrages of a new generation of artists and lovers of art; not a beginner but a veteran, yet a *débutant* once more. And in how different an artistic circle from the one he had known in years gone by! The great exodus of students to Parisian and Bavarian schools, of amateurs to foreign studios and galleries, had begun a few years before. Its results were just returning to us in the shape of a

more cultivated and critical public used to the best foreign work, and of a throng of vigorous, eager, cosmopolitan young painters, all alike disregardful of older American traditions and filled with new ideas on every subject from the definition of the abstract term "art" down to the most concrete professional questions of the studio. But in this new world George Fuller's voice sounded a consonant note. The artists — I mean the younger brood and not his brother academicians who "skied" his pictures — were the first and most enthusiastic in his praise. Their estimate of his talent and their feeling that it was akin in these his later efforts to their own ideas rather than to those of his actual contemporaries were before long shown by his election into the new "Society of American Artists." It is a pity, not for Fuller's sake but for its own, that the Academy's action was less appreciative. Who had so long held its lower title? Who so well deserved the higher? Yet when he died in 1884 Fuller had not yet been named Academician.

In 1879 Fuller showed at the Academy the large "Romany Girl" and a wonderful little canvas called "And She Was a

Witch;" in 1880 the "Quadroon" and a boy's portrait; and in 1881 the loveliest of all his works — the "Winifred Dysart." To the Society's exhibitions he also contributed year by year, chiefly portraits or landscapes, until in 1882 he sent two large figures, conceived in the same mood as the "Winifred," called "Lorette" and "Priscilla Fauntleroy," and in 1883 another, not dissimilar, called "Nydia," which the Metropolitan Museum now owns. Among other pictures shown from time to time were the "Herb Gatherers," a "Dandelion Girl," a "Psyche," a cupid-like "Boy and Bird," a "Girl with a Calf," and the "Arethusa" — his latest work and his most ambitious, a life-size nude figure, which after his death was given to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

II.

Fuller kept to the last his summer home and studio at Deerfield, but for several winters lived in Boston. Some German philosopher once said that a true artist can do his work contentedly either in rooms filled with beauty or in rooms denuded of everything; either surrounded by objects with which his

tastes are in unison and his art in keeping, or isolated as far as possible from all things whatsoever; which of these two environments he may prefer depends upon his temperament, but no really artistic temperament can content itself with half-way surroundings, with an environment of commonplace, distracting, Philistine ugliness. Whether Fuller consciously objected to the artistic litter which surrounds most modern painters, or whether he neglected it because bare walls and his own ideals were all he really needed — this I cannot say. But his Boston studio fulfilled with almost literal exactness the German's second postulate. If it was not "artistic" it certainly was not "Philistine." It was simply a place to work in— a large square room with one great window overlooking Boston Common, two or three chairs and easels, a platform for the model, and a triple line of unfinished pictures turned against the wall. There was only one thing more when I first saw the studio, but that thing was significant. Hung on the empty wall was a single little canvas, a gorgeous, vague, entrancing bit of Monticelli's color, shining like a star from the surrounding void. Here was the one rest-

ing-place, apparently, that the artist's eye demanded — a keynote, a term of comparison, an inspiring draught to which he could turn at will.

In person Fuller, like Camille Corot, offered a strong contrast to the spirituality of his art — tall, massively built, with a large head, strong blunt features, and a patriarchal beard of white. A theorist in physiognomy might have expected from such a form and face some sort of vigorous "realism" instead of the delicate idealizing art we know. But the dissonance was in first superficial seeming only. Fuller's words and manner were not only interesting and attractive in themselves, but valuable as giving an insight into the meaning and sentiment of his art.

No one, old or young, was a greater favorite with his brother artists, and no one more deservedly. There will be many of them to remember with me his unfailing good humor and courtesy, his lack of self-assertion, his genial spirit, his cordial appreciation for every good work whether or no it was in harmony with his own ideas and tastes, his hearty encouragement of young painters, his interest in everything that

tended to the advance of American art and artists. I knew of no more delightful place than his studio, where one forgot the art, almost, in one's interest in the man — or felt it to be merely a part, a fragment, an incomplete revelation of a most attractive personality, a most intelligent mind, a most warm and honest heart. He loved his art as few men love it even among artists; and he seemed to love humanity as do few of us, I fear, in any walk of life. A talk with him was one of the best spurs to effort, to energy, to enthusiasm of a clear-sighted and not a maudlin kind, that an artist or a critic could receive. No one could be careless or apathetic, unreasoning or hypercritical, in George Fuller's company — no one could forget the pleasure and responsibility of his work whether that work were painting or mere commentary. It was a lesson in temper to hear him speak of others, to note the self-reliance yet unfeigned humility with which he thought of his own performance. He was sensitive to criticism, as every earnest soul must be; but sensitive in the nobler way — in proportion always to the source from which it came rather than the verdict that it gave. If he re-

spected the critic he listened carefully and sweetly, whether the words were praise or blame; if he did not respect him he was not greatly touched in either case. To one who had praised him much I heard him say, "You have made my work all the harder for me. Your approval is undeserved; now I must try to come up with it." And to one who had written in dispraise I also heard him say, "I was a little hurt at first — but that is over. You did quite right; every man must see with his own eyes and speak quite honestly, you as well as I. I do not see and feel as you do, but I will think it over; perhaps your way is better, though as long as I don't agree with you — and I don't think I ever shall — I must go on as I have been going." No one who had ever spoken with Fuller could doubt that in both cases he meant exactly what he said.

The charge of affectation has sometimes been brought against his work, but never, I think, by a man who knew him. A more evidently honest and unaffected artist never lived. What he strove for was merely to express himself as clearly as he could. It seems grotesque to us, his friends, that he could ever have been accused of seeking

originality for its own sake, or of posturing to attract the public eye. Popular success was pleasant to him. It cannot be indifferent to any man who thinks he has a message to deliver — he must be glad when the public eye comes to understand and value it. But how did Fuller seek success? By seventeen years of steady toil, added to all the toil of his long student years, with no thought of blame or praise from others. *Himself* was the one he aimed to satisfy — the endorsement of others was a welcome but a secondary thing; and even when his countrymen were satisfied, he lamented what he called his failure to say his say in the manner he could wish. A true artistic temper in this respect, but, I fear, an exceptional one in others — in its "sweet reasonableness," its patience, its calmness, its gentle dignity, its respect for genuine criticism, its indifference to mere idle babble.

I have heard many artists speak well upon art in general but few so well as Fuller. His intelligence was acute and cultivated, his sympathies were wide, and his tongue a ready interpreter. He could give a reason for the faith that was in him in clear, forcible, and inspiring words. His

letters were full of phrases that were epigrammatic, almost, in their incisive truth. They were more like Millet's letters than any I have read, save for Millet's tone of sad despondency. I remember well an animated discussion in his studio when he explained Corot to one who, as he thought, traduced him. I had never heard so suggestive an analysis of Corot's power, and Fuller gayly promised me his help in an article I wished to write about him. This help — alas for my readers to-day — is one of the "might-have-been's." More than once I wished Fuller would use the pen in addition to the brush. Perhaps the charm would have evaporated as it so often has before. Couture, doubtless, talked very well, but no one wants another book like his. Yet I do not think that if Fuller had written we should have been disappointed; and at all events we must regret that no one did for him what Miss Knowlton did for Hunt — that there is no record left, except in a few minds that knew him and a few hasty letters, of the charm and the acuteness of his words about the art he loved so well.

III.

To mark now the chief characteristic of George Fuller's work I may say that it is distinctly ideal in its essence — opposed in its aims and in its technical methods to what we know as "realistic" painting. All paintings belong in one of these two classes, though the limits of the two meet, of course, and some few may stand on the wavering boundary line that parts them. The distinction between the one kind of work and the other is never to be based on choice of subject. Neither does it rest primarily on technical manner, though, indeed, a painter's manner is most apt to conform to the nature of his aims and conceptions, since it is but his means for expressing these. The true difference, however, is between the nature of one painter and another. Every artist, like every philosopher, is born a Platonist or an Aristotelian. It is not the thing he chooses to paint, but the way in which he sees and feels that thing, which marks him an idealist or a realist. Michael Angelo was an idealist while painting divine creative power and the wrath of judgment-days; Millet, while

depicting peasants at their toil. Dürer was a realist when painting the Madonna, as is Verestchagin when he draws the dead on the field of battle. Even in simple portraiture the same difference between dispositions makes itself clearly felt — Rembrandt on the one hand, Holbein on the other; Holbein a realist though limning philosophers and queens, Rembrandt an idealist though portraying the tawdry patriarchs of the *Ghetto*.

In drawing this distinction I would not, of course, have it for a moment believed that I call any art realistic in the sense of being a mere copy of external facts. All art, of whatever kind, however denuded, apparently, of imagination or poetic sentiment, — the art of Holbein or Jordaens or Metsu, even the so nearly literal and therefore so inartistic art of Denner, as well as the art of a Raphael or a Corot, — is, as Emerson has put it, "nature passed through the alembic of man." The difference between Denner and the idealist — still more between a really great artist like Holbein and the idealist — is a difference of quantity only. It lies merely in the degree to which he has modified, transmuted, transfigured, the theme he took from nature.

But this difference in degree may be so immensely wide that we are quite justified in drawing a distinction as between two opposing camps. Indeed, to draw this distinction clearly and assign a place within this camp or that, and near or far from their dividing lines, is the most important of tasks when we would estimate any painter's art.

Fuller's art not only belongs to the idealistic camp, but, considering his land and time, is peculiarly marked in this respect. The near-as-may-be reproduction of nature was a thing absolutely alien to his aims. To take Nature as his basis (as every artist must); to keep true to some of her general facts and through these facts to her soul (as every artist should); but to make the chosen things speak with a stronger, clearer, more poetic voice, coming from the painter's own feelings and ideas when in nature's presence — this, perhaps, roughly defines George Fuller's theory of art. To-day and in this new world, such an artistic temperament is uncommon. It is so rare, indeed, that many prophets who are hopeful of our artistic future yet believe that it will be a future devoid of idealism to a most marked

degree. For myself, I do not think this. But it is the worst of futilities to argue over the hidden things to come. I will therefore only plead that in the mere existence among us of one such individuality as Fuller's we have some ground for wider hope.

In subject most of Fuller's pictures are extremely simple; and without exception they are all conceived in a purely pictorial spirit, not depending for their interest on any "literary" or other extrinsic element. Many of them are large single figures, simple in pose, denuded of all accessories, connected with no incident upon the canvas, and still less with any that a name might suggest to the beholder. In the "Winifred Dysart," for example, we see against a shadowy landscape background with a very high horizon-line and a glimpse of cloud-streaked sunset sky above, the three-quarter-length figure of a young girl dressed in a pale grayish-lilac gown, her arms and neck uncovered, holding in one hand a small empty jug, and looking out of the canvas with a straight though veiled and dreamy gaze. Nothing could be more simple and unstudied than her pose, with both arms hanging loosely by her side, but

nothing could be more naïvely graceful. It is full of pure poetry, this picture — not poetry of a literary sort as the factor is too often introduced in art, but of a truly pictorial kind. We are told nothing of the girl; there is no "motive" used, no "anecdote" suggested. It is herself that interests and fascinates us, and less by actual beauty, though this exists in a high degree, than by psychical charm — by a spiritual emanation which shines from her face and form and from the artist's every touch. He has made us see not only what he saw in the model before him, but what he imagined, divined, or added — her inner as well as her outer nature. And as this was a poetical nature, and as it is expressed in a consonant technical style, the result is painted poetry. No more fascinating, haunting, individual figure has come from a contemporary hand; and it preserves its individuality in presence of the art of past days also — it had no prototype or inspiration in the work of any other brush.

In the "Romany Girl" a rather more forceful note is struck, but with almost as elusive a charm and quite as much individuality and beauty. The wild-eyed, half-

bold yet tender face, the supple action expressed in the quiescent figure, the passionate soul that speaks to ours as distinctly as does the gentle soul of the "Winifred" — these are the elements which place the canvas amid really creative works. The "Quadroon" has a similar impressiveness. Sitting in the cornfield with her arms resting on her knees, her great despairing eyes turned to ours, she reveals the mystery and suffering of her race. No pictured scene of slave-life, with action, accessories, and story, could be more expressive, more pathetic. These simple single figures, as Fuller has created them, are so full of meaning and individuality as well as of poetic charm that each becomes to us an actual being, remembered not as a mere pictured form but as a clear poetical identity.

The two pictures shown in 1882 seemed to me less perfect than the others, not quite so beautiful or so characteristic. They were transcripts, apparently, of visions that had been less compelling clear in the painter's own mind. The "Priscilla Fauntleroy," however, was only a degree less charming than the "Winifred." It seemed captious to criticise her even in the only way one

could — by comparing her with her elder sister. Fuller was his own severest critic. If his finest works made us hypercritical he had but himself to blame.

In the "Priscilla," by the way, and the "Romany Girl" and the "Nydia" we have what may seem to be subjects of literary interest — subjects emanating to some degree from an author's creative power, not altogether from the painter's. But these exceptions among Fuller's pictures only prove the rule with regard to his intellectual independence. If Hawthorne's ideal in the "Blithedale Romance" inspired the "Priscilla," for example, it served merely as a point of departure for the working of Fuller's own imagination. The picture is not illustrative in the popular sense, nor does it depend for its interest to any calculable degree upon adherence to its ostensible theme. We may or may not find Hawthorne's Priscilla in this shy, startled girl with one hand raised in a gentle, half-bewildered gesture to her face. But in either case we recognize a successful picture, and one that suggests a definite personality filled with delicacy and grace; and surely this should be true of every creation of the

sort. Whether or no it affords a complete realization of its extrinsic theme its chief value should be intrinsic. Its pictorial quality should have been first in the artist's mind and should be first to the spectator's sense. The artist should have clearly realized an inward ideal of his own whether or not in strict accordance with his author's. We need not concern ourselves very much with the titles a true painter gives his pictures. If Fuller's "Priscilla" is not very like Priscilla, and if his "Nydia" is not Nydia at all, it does not matter in the least. The name is the mistake and not the picture. What we are looking for is the illustration of some ideal, not of Hawthorne's or of Bulwer's but of Fuller's own. This we get in every case, and if by chance poet and painter are in complete accord — if, for instance, Emerson's "Romany Girl" and Fuller's are indeed one and the same — the fact hardly increases our pleasure in the picture. We scarcely remember whether Emerson wrote or Fuller painted first, the work of each is so truly a creation of his own.

The pictorial quality of Fuller's art was strongly shown when he came to actual

portraiture. It must have been, I think, a very "paintable" face which could tempt his brush, and a face that might be transmuted into some kind of beauty. With ugliness, even of a characteristic, expressive sort, his idyllic impulse had no concern. Children and young girls and half-grown blooming boys — these are the models he most often chose; though I remember a portrait of a very old lady which proved him sensible to the beauty of gray hairs too, and able to express it with force as well as poetry. Given sympathetic models, Fuller's portraits have much psychological interest; and his sympathetic models, being of the sort I have just noted, were those with which this kind of interest is most difficult to attain, since it must be revealed through the smooth unmarked flesh of youth and without strong accentuations of any sort. Yet we cannot but feel that strictly pictorial were of quite as much interest to the painter as psychologic possibilities. Indeed I once heard him say to a would-be sitter: "Don't expect too much. I shall try to make it something of a portrait and a good deal of a picture." His portraits, in a word, like his other works,

belong to the idealizing, not the realistic school; and about them he most often threw the same vague misty glamour he gave to his purely imaginative pictures — an atmosphere that resulted partly from his way of seeing nature, partly from the technical method which that way of seeing had induced.

Of his landscapes the same words may be used. They are not so much definite picturings of definite localities as idealized studies of foliage, color, and light. The most remarkable, perhaps, is the "Turkey Pasture in Kentucky," the lovely pastoral with which he reappeared at the Academy of Design in 1878. It is wonderful in its strongly poetic yet truthful expression of light, of sun and shadow, and of color, yet almost equally remarkable in grace of composition, and in the suggested life, motion, and individuality of the figures.

Such pictures as the "Herb Gatherer" and the "And She Was a Witch" resemble the "Turkey Pasture" in giving us small figures in beautiful landscape settings. But they differ through the presence of a dramatic, even tragic, element we have not yet encountered. The "Herb Gatherer"

shows us the bent and shrunken figure of an aged crone making her painful way through a weedy pasture, carrying the simples she has found. An uncanny, witch-like atmosphere pervades the picture. The face of the woman suggests past beauty, perhaps, but present converse with bitter thoughts; and the burden she bears seems to speak less of healing draughts than of strange forbidden conjurings and charms. The picture casts a spell about us — a spell such as Hawthorne's writing casts, though in the one case as in the other it is hard to explain just how the subtile magic works. In the "Witch" picture the same effect is wrought with more distinctly tragic factors and with even more intensity. The scene is a wooded landscape with tall thin tree-trunks; in the distance a woman led away to the dread tribunal, in the foreground a girl fleeing in terror to the door of her humble home. Beautiful in its externals, it is weirdly impressive in its import, though here again the sentiment is suggested without the aid of any definite incident or story, much being left to the observer's own imagination.

IV.

George Fuller was one of the most conscientious, or, I might better say, one of the most loving of workmen. No time, no effort, no thought or pains seemed to him too much to bestow on his creations. He worked on them sometimes for years before he allowed the world to see them, in the effort (always, I suppose, appearing fruitless to the true artist) to make the outward form tally with the inner vision. One could hardly venture to describe any picture still in his hands, knowing his way of suddenly blotting out, after they had stood for many years, perhaps, things which to others seemed entirely good. Even the "Witch" he recast just before he died, and it may no longer be at all as I have written. A collector who now buys one of Fuller's pictures often has, if he could only profit by the fact, a whole little gallery beneath the outer and visible composition.

With regard to the aims and ideas with which Fuller approached his work I may quote a few words of his own — words, it is but fair to say, that were not written for the public eye: "I have long since learned

to look on the painter's stubborn means as a lion in the path to be overcome without leaving evidence of the struggle. What sad days those were twenty years ago or more when every tyro noted down carefully the palettes of Rembrandt, Rubens, Reynolds, and Stuart thinking thereby to gain some notion of their power; and, if this was not enough, turned to the 'Handbook of Oil Painting' by Walker wherein were laid down thirty tints of red, blue, and yellow for the painting of the human head. Experience teaches one, in time, to throw such rubbish aside; to realize that one must see for himself; that all rules fail to guide him in color; that the great painters were not alike in their ways of working, but that all were true to their perceptions of the pervading truth, to their sense of gradation, to their control of their subject (common ground whereon Holbein is a colorist with Titian), and that the attainment of *gradation* is utterly above and regardless of any means used. To make one part keep its place or relation to the whole comes more through our feeling than our seeing. For myself, I am much controlled by the work before me, being greatly influenced by sug-

gestions which come through much scraping off, glazing, scumbling, etc., in trying to extricate myself from difficulties which my way of working entails upon me — always striving for general truth. Indeed, the object to be attained must always be reached through our own methods. The great painters tell us this and leave us to fight it out. They only insist upon gradation, the law of which governs values, tones, and harmony, so no detail must interfere with its truth. The main thing is to express broadly and simply, hiding our doing, realizing representation, not reproduction, — to get ourselves above our matter. A picture is a world in itself. The great thing is first to have an idea — to eliminate and to clear away the obstructions that surround it. It is more what is left out than what is put in. The manipulation admired by some the true painter seeks to hide. The question must be, What is below the surface? Color is intuitive. It belongs to the imagination. It affects the mind like the tones in music, and lives only in the minor key." Of his own picture, the "Girl and Calf," he says: "What shall I make of it? I don't yet know. The subject is all

there of course; but what is subject in a picture? Nothing. It is the *treatment* that makes or mars." By treatment we must understand, of course, the personal sentiment as well as the technical manner an artist can bring to bear. "A girl and a calf — what is that? We have all seen such figures a thousand times and taken no interest. It is my business to bring out something the casual eye does not perceive — to accentuate, to interpret. Just how I shall do it must come to me as I work — or the picture will be nothing."

These are the words of a pronounced idealist, yet words which, more or less in their entirety, will be echoed by all true artists, of whatever school. No phrase but this one: "Color lives only in the minor key" has so narrow a personal accent that it reveals simply George Fuller instead of the wise artist in the abstract. The disciples of modern dash and brilliancy, however, will see no virtue in the advice to "hide their doing," since this very "doing," independently of what is done, is too often to-day a picture's and an artist's highest claim to honor. That it is a very high claim when well sustained I do not ques-

tion; nevertheless, if there were more significance and individuality of matter behind some of the current ease and grace and strength of manner, modern art would greatly be the gainer.

V.

Fuller's technical manner has been the subject of much discussion and disagreement — a sure proof of its individuality if of nothing more. To some observers it seems not only original but very beautiful, with its subdued and misty yet glowing color, its somewhat wilful chiaroscuro, its synthetized drawing, its almost diaphanous textures, and its vague, involved, half-hesitating touches, where the handle of the brush seems as often to have been at work as its proper end. To others his manner has seemed a drawback, an imperfection, or even an affectation — a mannerism that clouds the better elements of his art. To me, however, it always seemed impossible thus to separate Fuller's matter from his manner. His soft rich color in its "minor key," his vague backgrounds, his shadowy outlines, his broadened details, his misty touch, seemed a very part and parcel of his

conceptions and his aims. This impression was confirmed when I saw one of his earlier works — a portrait painted long ago, before the European trip and the Deerfield hermit life, the head of a young man with a fair complexion and a brown beard. It was fine in color though without the harmony of tone Fuller mastered later on; perfectly simple in execution; much more definite, more detailed, more "realistic" — and more commonplace — than we might believe had ever been possible to his brush. Only in some intangibly suggested quality of feeling could one see any trace of the later Fuller; and this quality, we felt, was but clumsily expressed. The painter's poetic meaning seemed out of harmony with his prosaic speech. We longed to see the same face copied in the language he taught himself long after it was painted — a language much more delicate, abstract, dreamy, and therefore much better fitted to translate an idealist's conception.

If we look instead at the records he has left us in this later language our belief in its rightness (for him) steadily grows upon us. If it is not "clear" in the popular sense, it is supremely clear in the true sense

—in its ability to reveal precisely what Fuller wanted to say. Look at the "Winifred," which may be called the pearl in his treasury. Could there be a greater completeness in rendering, given just this idea to render? Could conception and expression be more closely bound together? Can we, indeed, separate the one from the other? Idea, sentiment, color, line, tone, handling —all are at one, all are one. The picture is an entity which we may take or leave, like or dislike, but cannot pick apart and praise for this, condemn for that. "Winifred," the "Romany Girl," the "Herb Gatherer," the "Turkey Pasture," painted by some clear and rapid Parisian hand would have been as obscured and lost as a dashing Parisian beauty, or a stretch of turbulent sunlit boulevard, had it fallen under Fuller's mist-enwrapped and poetizing brush.

As a colorist Fuller's charm is to me very great. His range is called narrow but there is an essential difference, I think, between the cool green scale he adopted in some of his landscapes, the delicate grayish harmony of the "Winifred," the deeper, browner tone of the "Romany Girl," the rosy glow of the

"Nydia," and the soft golden hue of many of his portraits. It is probable that his ever-present mistiness of touch, and the fact that with all his modulations he always holds to his "minor key," make his color seem to careless observers more unvarying than it really is. Sometimes it is perfect in its beauty, and it is always entirely individual. Its excellence never consists in brilliancy, but in harmony, in complete tone, in the way things are made to keep in place, and to reveal their forms and relationships, without recourse to the least violence of contrast. There is no accentuation in Fuller's work, never a vivid hue, a really high light, or a really low dark. There is no emphasis whatever, either in the color or in its application, but always delicacy, self-restraint, suavity, mellowness, low, soft-toned, misty harmony. Yet there is no lack of strength in his best examples, and certainly no deficiency in the expression of those broad facts which he wished to show. The "Turkey Pasture" is the most radiant and sunshiny of all his pictures; the "Winifred Dysart" perhaps the most delicately and rarely colored. But one of the most delightful of all in color

was a portrait I saw in his studio not long before he died — the three-quarter length figure of a young girl standing against a background of russet-hued landscape, fine in its suggestion of breeze and life. The dress was white, but the word gives little notion of the subtile tone by which the artist had subdued its crudeness and brought it into keeping with the glowing background. As usual, there was little insistence upon textures except as regards the flesh. All was broadened, simplified, poetized — taken out of the world of detailed imitation into a realm of somewhat ethereal yet clearly realized imaginings.

VI.

There are idealists as well as realists who might have been born in any land. But there are others who could have sprung up and developed only in the soil which actually bore them; and among these last is Fuller. He is as American in his art as the most thorough-going young realist who paints New York streets by the electric light, or negro boys eating watermelons. Yes, far more American than most of these; for, I say again, the spirit, the quality, of a

man's art do not depend upon his subject-matter, and it so happens that many of our young painters approach local subjects with a sort of cold cosmopolitan vision, while Fuller felt his more subtilely characteristic themes with a characteristically American soul. No one, it seems to me, but an American could have painted the "Winifred Dysart," that etherealization of our own native type of beauty. No one else could have preserved the elusive yet distinct American look of all Fuller's portrait sitters, though veiling their features in the haze of vaporous methods. And his "Romany Girl" would be an American gypsy even to those who knew nothing of Emerson's verse — a wild creature of our own wild woods. It is the same with the "Nydia." It is not so interesting in character as most of its companions, for the face is seen in something less than profile; but in refinement and delicacy of feeling, in perception of the peculiar beauty of early youth, of freshness, innocence, and shy grace, it is akin, as I heard one careful critic say, "to the creations of a Reynolds or a Greuze." But just as clearly as Sir Joshua's young girls are English, just so

distinctly is this little so-called Nydia an American, though a poetized, etherealized American. The evidence thereof is intangible, elusive, inexplicable in words, of course, lying, perhaps, just in the poise of the head and outline of the nose and cheek. Yet it is so clear that the title seems indeed ill-chosen. No one could divine Bulwer's blind Thessalian in this dainty rosy little maid, not even by the help of the shadowy volcanic suggestions which the background shows. It was a mistake, perhaps, for an artist of this temper ever to essay illustration even in the vaguest and most general way. The effort must have hampered his brush a little, although such a brush could not very seriously try to bend itself to extrinsic requirements. And while no title troubles those who care for pictures as pictures, an artist had better not forget the fact that there are many persons who think the suggestions of a name are the chief things to be looked for in a painting, and resent their non-fulfilment as they would the breaking of a solemn contract.

Of course with such subjects as he chose and such methods as he used, the national accent of George Fuller's art is never sharp,

much less aggressive. He was not the man to realize Walt Whitman's ideal of our painters' duty: —

"To formulate the modern;
To limn with absolute faith the mighty, living present;
To exalt the present and the real;
To teach the average man the glory of his daily walk and trade."

It was nothing so definite as this with Fuller. He has more the sort of brush that says: —

"An odor I 'd bring as of forests of pine in March."

It is a flavor, not a message, from the national life that we recognize in his creations. But it is a flavor both acute and all-pervading. So at least it seems to me; for criticism of this kind cannot be dogmatic — it must be the mere putting on record of personal impressions.

But if I may trust such impressions still a little further I will add that to me Fuller's art is not only American but distinctly local. It has an aroma — I will not say of Boston but perhaps of Concord. It is a painter's version of the delicate "transcendental" New England poesy that is fast dying out of this generation, but the essence of which is preserved to us in the writings of the

last. Hawthorne's name has occurred more than once already to my pen, and it well suggests the quality of Fuller's art. Such a canvas as the "Witch" recalls Hawthorne's mood even to dull perceptions — not more by its choice of subject than by its subtilely artistic, dreamy, individual methods of expression. But more convincing still is the fact that when the "Winifred Dysart" was first exhibited and people were speculating about its name, almost every one said: "I am sure she must be some character of Hawthorne's, though I cannot fix her place," while in truth the name was invented by Fuller, merely because he thought a canvas ought to have some title to identify it in the public mind.

VII.

A few weeks after George Fuller's death in April, 1884, one hundred and seventy-five of his pictures were collected for exhibition in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. I shall aways count it a great misfortune that I did not see them there; but so many of them were well known to me that I could guess the effect they made upon those who judged them all together — embracing

as they did almost all his more important works, and showing him at his best while at his weakest too.

If I try now to explain this effect it is for the sake of saying a word on those vexed questions of originality, versatility, and mannerism in art which are important because so often wrongly envisaged by the layman's mind.

A glance at the collection undoubtedly revealed at once, as the prime characteristic of George Fuller's art, an intense individuality, a distinct unlikeness to the art of any other man. But there was very likely disagreement with regard to the value of this characteristic, since it involved a certain narrowness of range. Very likely, there were not a few observers who would have preferred to find, in so large an exhibition, a wider range of subject-matter, more variety in composition, a greater variability in feeling and less constancy in technical directions. A charge often brought before against Fuller — the charge of monotony as regards not only his color but the essence of his work as a whole — was probably repeated with no little insistence.

It should, however, be remembered in the

first place that no artist paints to fill a gallery with his pictures. He paints in the hope that they will be scattered far and wide, each to bring his artistic message into a new home and before a new group of eyes. Why then should he strive to make each quite unlike its fellows? Why, too, in any case, should he strive for great unlikeness since there will almost certainly be but one direction in which he can do his very best? We can count upon the fingers of a sigle hand those greatest men of genius who could be themselves, in the truest, fullest sense of the term, no matter what subject they might choose, what manner they might put on. Their versatility multiplies their crowns of glory, but does not increase the radiance of any single one. And the average man of genius — if I may use such a phrase — must content himself with one crown, — and merely strive to make it shine as brightly as he can. The man who could paint the "Winifred" and the "Turkey Pasture" was a true creative artist. We go outside the legitimate bounds of criticism when we cavil because he could not also give us other and quite different things; and he would have gone

outside the path of wisdom had he tried to do so.

Variety we want in art, I know; but the best way to get it is not for one man to try for very varied things. It is a fallacy, I am sure, to think so; but a fallacy by the light of which much modern criticism is penned, and much modern painting is, alas, accomplished. A truer recipe would prescribe, as the best way of securing vital and valuable variety, the best way of rescuing art from that slough of imitation, repetition, conventionality, and formality, into which ever and anon it seems like to sink and flounder, — a truer recipe would prescribe that each artist should set himself first of all to find some one artistic message which he can deliver better than all others. If he cannot discover such a message, or if, when discovered, it is not one which no other brush can tell in just his fashion, he is not a great artist. The divine gift of personal insight is denied him. He is forever shut out from the divine mission of being an interpreter between Nature and mankind. He must content himself with being a mere copyist of Nature's superficial face or of the work of her true interpreters. A

clever painter he may learn to be, but of clever painters the world has perhaps enough. What it needs, what it will always need and welcome, is the original artist, the born seer and demonstrator. If, then, I repeat, a man can find some one way in which this mission is possible to him, let him cultivate and keep to it, broadening it as far as possible, but not stepping out of its limits into alien paths. Let him tell his own story in his own voice, and not trouble heart and hand with the idea that "novelties" are asked of him. Thus and thus only can art as a whole secure that variety, that versatility, that width of range and depth of insight, that truth and force and flexibility, which make it the delight and glory of a nation instead of a mere skin-deep accomplishment, coldly practised and but lightly prized.

There is, I know, a danger connected with this manner of conceiving one's work — the danger of falling into routine and mere self-repetition, of giving, instead of ever-new readings of the same artistic message, mere reëchoes of readings already laid before the world; the danger, in a word, of cultivating mannerism in thought, senti-

ment, and treatment. The risk is real and deadly. Mannerism is an easy thing to yield to, and a thing which must vitiate all power since it implies a deadening of the perceptive faculties as regards both the world of nature and the products of the brush. But as it does imply this, it will be seen that a really earnest and enthusiastic temperament may well escape it. And with all its dangers mannerism, I think, is less to be dreaded than that dissipation of force, that weakening of insight, that dilution of feeling, that lapsing into mere experiment (never to be pushed to valuable outcome), which so often follow upon the desire to avoid its risks.

This is the mood in which George Fuller lived and worked. He had a peculiar way of seeing and feeling nature, and he cultivated that way and strove to make his technical manner truthfully express it. He did not try to see like any other man alive or dead, or to paint like any other, or to paint such things as appealed to others. He tried to be himself, and to show himself to us as clearly and completely as he could.

The charge of mannerism is one that could not fail to be brought against any

work so single in its aim, so uniform in its feeling and its processes; and I do not deny that certain of his pictures give color to the charge: they are dilutions or repetitions of happier creations rather than true creations in themselves. But this is merely to say that no man is always at his best. Weak essays we can always find in the legacy of a prolific painter. Sometimes we may be justified in feeling that they would have been fewer if he had gone differently about his work; if, for example, in the case of a very "individual" painter, he had tried to widen his range a little. But oftener these lapses are but due to the fact that there are times when even the most earnest and able worker will fall below himself and be less clear of eye, less sensitive in feeling, less happy in conception and eloquent in speech, than in his strongest hours. So it was with Fuller. When we think of his work as a whole, we do not feel that he was mistaken in limiting his efforts within a comparatively narrow range. On the contrary, we feel that his fine works are finer than they would have been had he diffused himself more widely, and that his weaker ones would probably not have gained in such a case. I do not

think the vice of mannerism often or deeply affected his art; and I am sure it would not have been well replaced by the opposite sin of uncongenial effort.

Even if we use a milder word than mannerism and say monotony, again I think it is less applicable to his work than some would have us grant. There is indeed, great diversity between his pictures, if we look a little deeper than the surface of the paint. It is true that he who has seen one Fuller will never mistake another; but it is not true, as I have heard it bluntly put, that he who has seen one has seen them all. The character of Fuller's handling is persistent, and has been the more remarked on account of its strong personality. But in their meaning, their conception, their inner essence as apart from the language which reveals it, I am sure there is a vital difference between such pictures as the "Priscilla" and the "Witch," the "Winifred," the "Quadroon," and the "Herb Gatherer;" and in addition to these have we not a long list of portraits and of landscapes which vary much among themselves?

If a man can create for the meeting of his own needs a novel, personal, and charm-

ing form of pictorial expression, he is a master among painters as distinguished from an accomplished, even consummately accomplished scholar; and if he possesses imagination — power of individual vision and of fresh conception — he is an artist as distinguished from even a masterly painter. In this sense George Fuller was both an artist and a master. His imagination was not of a powerful kind. His poetry is seductive not compelling, idyllic not passionate; it marks him a dreamer not a seer; but it is true poetry and proper to himself alone. On the other hand, his workmanship is not brilliant, not audacious, not the marvellous legerdemain with which the hand of some lesser artist may often dazzle our eye; but it is very artistic, very expressive, when at its best extremely beautiful, and always all his own — learned from no forerunner and to be learned by no successor. Original and delightful conceptions told in an original and charming tongue: this is the summing-up, and it puts George Fuller in a high place. It puts him with the best of his guild, although not of necessity with the very first among them. His long retirement from the world was a dangerous ex-

periment. Given a lower nature, a duller conscience, a less thoroughly artistic soul, he would probably have developed weaknesses of many kinds — rigid mannerisms, self-conceit, want of mental and technical balance, loss of insight into his own work and the work of others. But to Fuller this seclusion meant fifteen years of patient, humble, enthusiastic, self-reliant yet self-criticising toil, in wise disregard of popular advisings. It meant the persistence of his own ideal and the development of his expressional means along a parallel line. And it resulted in art of an ideal kind, personal, lovely, pure, and true.

Another word I must add, not so much with reference to Fuller as to myself and those whose work, like mine, is to write of art and artists. It is often said, when we confess to knowing and admiring an artist as well as his art, that we confuse the one sentiment with the other. We are told that we praise him either with conscious friendly falsehood or with unconscious friendly bias. It is presumed that the personal had preceded the critical estimate, whereas, in truth, it more often follows as a consequence. I would not dwell upon such

a point did I not know how widespread a feeling this is, and how constantly it militates against the acceptance of the most well-considered and impartial verdicts. Of course there is danger of bias (either for or against, be it said), when a writer comes in personal contact with an artist; but it must be incurred, for the greater risk of misapprehension and partial insight threatens if one knows the work alone and not the worker too. Of a single picture one may judge by its own witness only; but not of all the work of a painter's life. To do this one must know aims, intentions, moods, and methods, as well as mere results. My earnest admiration for George Fuller's art first put me in the way of knowing him; and it was a piece of good fortune, to be treasured in this contradictory world, that I found him so exactly what a lover of his pictures would have wished.

VI.

WINSLOW HOMER.

1836.

WINSLOW HOMER holds an intermediate place between our elder and our younger painters. Like a few others of great distinction — like George Fuller, George Inness, William Hunt, and John La Farge — he cannot be classed with those who represent the ante-bellum period of American art, or with that very different band who began their work about the time of our centennial celebration. Alike in the date and in the nature of his success he stands apart from both these well-defined groups. In aim, spirit, and result his art is as radically modern as the most recent which reveals the effect of foreign training on American minds and hands; yet he is as distinctively an American product as were those painters of the old "Hudson River school" whose work shows no point of affinity with his own.

I.

Winslow Homer was born in Boston in 1836. When he was six years old his family removed to Cambridge, where country life fostered the tastes and feelings he has revealed so clearly in his work. Never was any painter more rurally-minded. Never did any dweller in cities more completely ignore on canvas not their existence only but also the existence of the human types they foster. Of course this would not be remarkable were he simply a landscape painter; but while landscape elements are very prominent in his work, humanity is rarely absent and is usually his chief concern. But it is rustic humanity always, or of late years, humanity which goes down to the sea in fishing-boats. The rural American of his earlier pictures is shown with a persistency, a sympathy, and a simple directness of speech quite unequalled in our art. We get the very quintessence of New England forms and faces, and of New England fields and hillsides, in this early work, and just as truly the quintessence of negro life and its surroundings. No man could mistake the home and peo-

ple of this painter. No man could doubt his being a Yankee by birth and nature. It was this national flavor that caused his work to be so much noticed at the Paris Exhibition of 1878, and so much praised by critics who saw its technical shortcomings but forgave them because of the genuine transatlantic sentiment that was expressed in their despite.

Homer's taste for art seems to have developed very early, for we are told that by the time he was twelve he had accumulated a large stock of crayon drawings. His efforts were encouraged by his father, — a fact in refreshing contrast to the common course of artistic true-love, — and at the age of nineteen he was apprenticed to Bufford, a lithographer in Boston. The first work of his apprenticeship was in the shape of title-pages for sheet music; the most important, perhaps, was a series of portraits of all the members of the Massachusetts Senate. When he came of age he abandoned the lithographer's craft, both the mechanical and the business requirements of which had galled him, and set up a studio in Boston. He designed much for the Messrs. Harpers' wood-engravers, and

the firm soon offered him a permanent engagement. But he refused to bind himself in any way again, and worked on independently, studying all the while. In 1859 he removed to New York, and entered the night-schools of the Academy. In 1861 he began for the first time to use color, going directly to nature for models and to his own instinct for methods. With the outbreak of the war he went to Washington, and thence to the front with the army of the Potomac, at first as artist-correspondent for the Harpers and later to serve his private aims. His first oil paintings were war scenes — among them the well-known "Prisoners from the Front."

After the war the young artist made his home for many years in New York. Now he lives winter and summer in an isolated cottage not far from Scarboro' on the coast of Maine, and pays but brief visits to the city. He has been prolific in oil, in water-color, and in black-and-white. Most of his work has been in the line of out-door *genre*, though he sometimes gives us landscape by itself, sometimes interiors, and occasionally figures whose surroundings are of slight importance. Every one remembers the small

water-colors he used to send by the dozen to each annual exhibition — the barefoot, sun-bonneted little girls; the flocks of ragged sheep with a half-grown shepherdess, perhaps, in pink or lilac calico; the Yankee boys playing marbles by the gaunt old school-house or lolling under apple-boughs through which the sun was sifting; the negro urchins eating water-melons; the tall haymakers in shirt-sleeves and coarse hide boots; the thousand and one rustic scenes — mere pictorial scenes without incident or story — that were recorded with so much freshness, truth, and force if with so little beauty. And we remember just as well his more elaborate early works in oil — interiors of negro-huts or New England farm-houses characteristically peopled, and groups of blue-coats which came frequently in war-times. Here, too, Homer was a painter of simple incident and pictorial effect, never of stories or dramatic meanings. His soldier-boys were painted for their own sake, not for the sake of the actions they performed; — so far as I recollect, he never portrayed a scene of actual conflict.

With all these things every visitor to

our galleries soon became familiar, — for it is a noteworthy point about Homer's work that it always makes itself felt, no matter what its surroundings may chance to be. Every passer-by marks it at once, and gives it a decided verdict of approval or dispraise. No one can be blind to it in the first place or indifferent in the second, as one may be to most of the things by which it is encompassed on the average exhibition wall — things probably more pretty and possibly more polished, but in almost every case much weaker and more conventional, less original and at the same time less truthful. An instance in point is the way in which it affected my own childish eyes in days when I dared to hold very few positive opinions about works of art. As a youthful student of exhibitions and picture-papers, I remember to have hated Winslow Homer in quite vehement and peculiar fashion, acknowledging thereby his personal quality and his strength, and also his freedom from those neat little waxy prettinesses of idea and expression which are so alien to true art but always so attractive to the childish mind, whether it be lodged in a body childish or adult.

Looking back to-day at these early pictures they seem most remarkable for their revelation of a bold, unguided effort to paint outdoor nature as it actually appears, and to translate its broad effect rather than its details. Crude, harsh, and awkward though they were, there was the true breath of life in them all — the glint of actual sunshine, the smell of mother-earth, an accent in every line and tone which proved that they had been painted face to face with facts, and that no fact had been hard eneugh or new enough to daunt the 'prentice hand which wrought them. To-day such characteristics might not seem remarkable. The *plein air* gospel and the gospel of "breadth" are commonplaces now. Every tyro thinks of his "personal impressions," scorns studio receipts and conventional ideals, tries, at least, to use his own eyes, and feels bound to wrestle with the outdoor world in all its vividness of bold blues and greens and its brilliancy of full sunlight. But in New York at that time even a picture which was painted out of doors was painted with reference to studio formulas, and with far more thought for truth to minor facts than for the "first im-

pression" or the "general effect." Not only were the special problems of what we now call modern art neglected — the fact that nature presented them was scarcely felt. What we now call modern landscape painting had not even been foreseen. I think we must place Winslow Homer first in time among the many real outdoor painters of landscape whom we have to-day, and certainly he was first among our outdoor painters of the figure. He was a follower of Corot in spirit — though by no means in mood or manner — before he can ever have seen a Corot, a "realist" before the realistic school was recognized, an "impressionist" before the name had been invented.

II.

Eight or nine years ago Winslow Homer astonished many who, knowing his work very well, thought they had gauged his talent and understood its preferences and its range; for he then exhibited a series of water-colors conceived in an entirely novel vein. No one could have guessed that he might attempt such things; yet the moment they were shown no one could doubt whose hand had been at work — so strong

were they, so fresh and free and native. They were marine studies of inconsiderable size, done at Gloucester, Massachusetts. Never before had Homer made color his chief aim or chief means of expression. In his paintings his scheme had usually been cold and unattractive. In his aquarelles he had often used very vivid hues, but rather, it seemed, for the purpose of portraying the effect of strong sunlight than with an eye to color for its own sake; and the result had been vigor not unmixed with crudeness. But in these marine studies color had been his chief concern, and there was much less crudeness, much more beauty in the result. Most of them were stormy sunset views, broadly indicated, strongly emphasized. A sweep of red-barred black water, a stretch of black-barred red sky, and the great black sails of a fishing-boat set against them, with no detail, and the fewest of rough brush-strokes, gave us the color-scheme of nature intensified, and nature's movement too — the slow rise and fall of the billows, the lurch of the boat, the heavy pulsation of the air. The hues were a palpable exaggeration of the hues of nature; but all color that is homogeneous and

good on canvas must be an exaggeration in one way or another. No one can paint nature's color just as it appears; and if one could, the result would not be clear and expressive art. "Art is a state of compromises, of sacrifices" — we have seen it in studying Corot — much omitted or altered for the sake of the clear showing and accenting of a little. Most artists accomplish this end by the weakening process — by conceiving the scene before them in a lower, duller, less positive key than nature's, and subduing all the notes in such a manner that the chief ones may seem strong enough by contrast. To use a familiar phrase, they tone things down. But Homer had gone the other way to work in these little marines and had toned things up. He had boldly omitted all tones which could not serve his purpose, — which was to show the demoniac splendor of stormy sunset skies and waters, — and then had keyed the chosen tones to deeper force, made them doubly powerful, the reds stronger and the blacks blacker, emphasizing a theme which might well have been thought already too pronounced for artistic use. That he could do this and keep balance in his work is a pa-

tent proof of his artistic power. For though over-statement is not more non-natural or unallowable in art than under-statement, yet under-statement is, of course, the easier, safer kind of adaptation. If this is unsuccessful the result is merely weak; but unsuccessful over-statement is atrocious. Homer, however, was so clear and sane and well-poised in his exaggerations that he did more than satisfy the eye. He opened it to the full force and beauty of the natural effects he had translated, and filled for us every future stormy sunset sea with memories of how he had portrayed one like it.

Nevertheless I would not be understood to mean that even in these pictures he had won himself the right to be called a colorist in the highest sense. His color was good in its way and most impressive. But the finest color, no matter how great its simplicity and strength, must always preserve an element of suavity; and suavity, sensuous charm of any kind, was wholly absent from these pictures. There was grandeur in them all despite their extreme simplicity; but they were rude, violent, almost brutal. Those who remember them will remember also how they divided the honors of the ex-

hibition with certain water-colors sent from Munich by Frank Currier — these likewise being color-studies of stormy sunset skies though over moorland instead of water. In comparing them one saw the difference between a natural colorist like Currier and a vigorous artist like Homer, who, although he could make himself felt through color, did not handle it as though born to this sole end. Currier's drawings, in spite of their great breadth and hurrying dash of method, were far more suave in tone, more subtile in suggestion, more harmonious, more beautiful; and they were also more skilful and refined in execution. But they were no more artistic in conception than Homer's, no stronger, no more valuable, as fresh, frank records of personal sensations felt in the face of nature; and they lacked the native American accent which Homer had put into even his waves and boats.

III.

At the Water-color Exhibition of 1883 Homer again surprised us by a series of drawings with novel claims to admiration. These were pictures of English fisher-girls, set, as usual with him, in landscape sur-

roundings almost as important as the figures themselves, and were by far the finest works he had yet shown in any medium. It is true they lacked one quality which we had prized in his earlier art — the distinctively American accent. But we could not resent the fact since, if an artist chooses a foreign theme he must see it, of course, in its own proper light or do neutral work without salt or savor. To paint English girls as though they were New Englanders would have been as great an artistic weakness as the much more common one of painting Yankees to look like Brittany peasants. Homer had clearly understood and expressed the American type during many years of labor. Yet he now freed himself so wholly from its influence that these English girls were as typically English as any which had ever come from a British hand. Surely the fact is but another proof of his artistic individuality, his freedom from conventionalism in thought or method.

Three or four of these pictures — the "Voice from the Cliffs," for instance, "Inside the Bar," "Teignmouth," and the "Coming Storm" — soon became widely

known through reproductions in the "Century Magazine" and other periodicals; and the strong impression they made was deepened when a large collection of similar water-colors was separately exhibited in New York and Boston. Then we saw how great indeed had been the painter's progress. He had improved his color while losing nothing of its personality. The dark gray tone of "Inside the Bar" — a fish-wife fighting against the wind, with swirling waves and clouds beyond her and two boats in the middle distance — was admirably kept and modulated, and gave as fine a sky as I remember to have seen in water-color work from any brush; and though the flesh-tones were too purplish for truth or beauty, they worked in well with the general scheme. In the "Voice from the Cliffs," where there were three figures, the same fault in the flesh-tones appeared. Yet one could not say the picture was disagreeable in color. It was pitched in a peculiar and rather crude though powerful key, but it held well together within that key; and — need I affirm it? — harmony, unity, is the first thing for which we ask in color. Moreover, among the less famous pictures

of this English series there were some that were really beautiful in color — frank, brilliant, pure, and even charming. In handling there was likewise great improvement — more skill, more refinement, more delicacy, while no decrease in strength.

But the most interesting thing about all these pictures was their beauty of line. Linear beauty is a rare quality in modern art — a quality, indeed, for which a modern artist scarcely ever strives without a lapse into conventionality and pseudo-classic lifelessness. And it is a quality which, from early signs, we might have thought the last that Winslow Homer could achieve. He had never even seemed to think of it before. In his paintings composition had been pretty good but not remarkably good, and in his aquarelles it had been quite neglected. So far as I remember his early work, he had never shown a care for really effective, well balanced composition, and still less any trace of feeling for the charm and value of pure linear beauty. Compare the carelessly chosen attitudes, the angular contours, the awkwardly truthful gestures of his New England figures with the sculptural grace of these fisher-girls, and no contrast could be greater.

Novelty in choice of subject does not explain the improvement. Had Homer seen with the same eyes as before and worked with the same ends in view, he would not have perceived and emphasized the splendid linear suggestions of his new models, more patent though they were than those of his fellow-countryfolk. For, although more patent, they had still been suggestions only, not plain, persistent characteristics of every figure and attitude he may have chanced to see. They had been no more than possibilities awaiting discovery and development at the eye of artistic selection. Look at the woman in "Inside the Bar." No figure could be more genuine and veracious; but it is very beautiful too, even in the almost over-bold line of the apron twisted and inflated by the wind. Can we think that every English fish-wife walking through the wind is so superb in form, so magnificent in pose?

The "Voice from the Cliffs" is still more remarkable for linear charm. The three girls stand close together looking up and listening with parted lips, relieved against a high wall of chalk with a glimpse of blue sea and a distant boat. Two of

them hold large baskets against their hips while the third, who stands a little back, grasps a bundle of nets that hangs from her shoulder. The lines throughout are so harmonious, dignified, and graceful — at once so lovely and so strong — that they might well be transferred intact to a relief in marble. Yet they have none of the cold academicism with which a statuesque effect on canvas is usually associated. They are statuesque, these girls, but they are living, moving, breathing women and not statues, and as realistic and unconventional as the most awkward Yankee boys that Homer had ever painted.

It is interesting to note one device through which this rare, fine quality of linear grace is rendered. It is not a novel device though we see it more often in marble than in paint; but it is one which only a master hand can manage rightly. It is the device which both accents and harmonizes lines by reiterating them. Some — of course not all — of the corresponding lines in each of the three figures reëcho some of those in each of the others. For example, the left arm of the central girl, which is stretched out to hold the basket, is almost

identical in pose with the left arm of one of her companions, while her bent right arm reflects the lines of the right arm of the third figure. Of course there is no literal repetition ; but similitude, symmetry, is sufficiently well marked to result in a forceful, rhythmical grace, which is perhaps the rarest of all qualities in modern art. The same bold analogy in certain leading lines — kept from monotony by delicate minor differences, — constantly recurs in these English water-colors with the finest effect. One I remember especially where a long line of women come over the brow of a hill, bearing great bundles of nets on their backs ; — no procession of Greek canephoroi can have been more noble and stately, yet not the women themselves can have been more modern, more English, more alive. In the "Voice from the Cliffs," again, the same principle of delicately varied repetition shows even in the faces. Instead of the contrasted types which most artists would have chosen — the fear of monotony guiding their hand — there is but a single type. We see three girls of similar age, build, cast of features, and emotional nature. But there is no sameness. Each face is dis-

tinctly individualized. Each girl is herself though the others are her sisters.

Nor was Homer's new power over linear beauty shown merely in his figures. The composition of the "Teignmouth" — with its waves and drifting smoke-wreaths and the group of figures in the foreground boat — was marvellously fine; and in "Inside the Bar" and all the other coast scenes, the lines of cloud and shore were arranged with consummate skill — perfectly true to nature, yet, so to say, framing the figures, giving them additional importance, and bringing them into vital union with the landscapes where they stood. Always the result had been so simply and perfectly achieved that it looked like the outcome of mere instinct. It looked as though the painter had found, not posed, his figures thus. But when a result in art looks instinctive — and looks well — we may be sure that it has been the outcome of artistic reasoning and effort. These pictures, I must say again, gave us no right to believe that Homer had always, or often, seen his fisher-girls in such fine harmonious groups, with such fitting accompaniments of line in shore and sky; they gave us every right to feel most certain

that he had merely seen how splendidly they might be posed and placed, and then had found out the right way to do it — not altering, but, in Corot's phrase, "completing" nature.

But, after all, the prime excellence of these pictures lay not in one quality or another which appeared upon analysis, but in the fact that all qualities held so well together in a result pictorially so complete. The impression was vivid and individual, though details had been carried further than in Homer's early essays. Out-door nature had been given the true out-door look. Facts of atmosphere and light had been translated with wonderful force, and linear beauty was vitalized by great strength in the suggestion of character. Although they were but water-colors and pictured toiling peasants merely, they were serious works of "high art;" and by this I mean that they had an ideal cast which placed them far above mere prosaic records of common facts. One can hardly call Winslow Homer a poetical painter, and perhaps he would himself disclaim the title of idealist, saying that he only tries to show us certain interesting facts under the aspects which

seem to him the best for pictorial use. But this is just the point I wish to make. Interesting facts are what he wants, and the best possible aspects for pictorial use. Wise choice, not chance, directs his brush, and personal feeling shows in its creations. To say this is to imply some sort of "completing" process; and such a process always implies some sort of idealism in the result. A poetical painter might have dwelt more on the spiritual suggestions of these rude sea-faring folk and their surroundings — a Millet would have shown us more of the pain and pathos of the fisher's life, more of the cruelty and terror of the waves from which he wrings his bread. But Homer, merely emphasizing physical suggestions, — showing us the dignity and beauty which may reside in humble bodies and in waves and skies, — is he not an idealist too although perhaps no poet?

IV.

Despite the proverb, a change of sky does mean a change of mood to some men, and among them is the sensitive, clear-eyed artist. Soon after Homer's return from England he went to Florida and the West

Indies, and again brought back rich booty of a novel sort. The very essence of the tropics breathed in these new aquarelles, — bold, dashing, vivid studies of turquoise sea and blinding sun, of bright-hued plastered houses gaudy with vines and flowers, of negro fishers for sharks and divers for sponges, of impenetrable, luscious jungles and wild, wind-tossed palms. Brighter colors than any Impressionist has found in the south of France he had found in these western isles ignored of art, — a stronger light, a more palpitating, scintillating atmosphere, and a race of swart and naked men of incomparable artistic value. And with what unshrinking truth to vividness of light and hue he had painted — a colorist now to rank with the boldest and freshest of our time. How wonderfully he had placed in these shimmering scenes his bronzed and dusky figures, eagerly at work on the sea or half beneath it, true, local, individual in type yet beautiful in outline and arrangement. There was one group leaning over a vessel's side to watch for a diver's reappearance — three almost naked figures, the first crouching, the second leaning, the third standing erect — where the

lines built themselves up with extraordinary grandeur yet with as much simplicity and naturalness as though no negro in the world had ever taken an awkward pose. There was an "Approaching Tornado" in which a whole tragedy lay latent just in the way the atmosphere was painted; and a "Norther — Key West" that was tragedy made palpable through three bending, agonizing palm-trees, splendid in line, and as vital and passionate as though they had been human creatures.

These too, you may say, were "fortunate" subjects for an artist; — could Homer have done as well had he observed and worked at home? Happily the answer has come from himself. Since his West Indian voyage he has lived on the coast of Maine, where, if anywhere, we might anticipate a dearth of fortunate themes in so far at least as humanity is concerned. Yet he has not dwelt there in communion with his memories of the Fortunate Isles. He has let his portfolios lie with all their luxuriant suggestions, has painted what he found close at hand, and has given us the best work of his life. I cannot speak of his latest water-colors, with their magnificent rendering of

waves on rock-bound shores; or of his "Eight Bells" with its two finely characterized figures relieved against the seething waters and flying clouds which follow after tempest; or of that slow tragedy so quietly yet forcibly suggested in his "Lost in the Fog off the Banks." I can give but a word to the two pictures which exhibit him at his very best, showing us the full measure of a man who is at once a realist in aim and an idealist in feeling, a painter with a personal style and an artist with an individual message to deliver.

One of these is the "Life Buoy," where, in a yawning hollow between two watery mountains, swings a slender rope, and, made fast to it, a sturdy sailor bearing across his knees the unconscious figure of a girl. No one could have painted a scene like this with such convincing strength who had not lived among the breakers and the tragedies they work; but no one, on the other hand, who lacked that constructive imagination which the thorough-going realist professes to despise. The theme, in its essentials, was the saving of a woman's life. To express it the painter gave prominence to her blanched face and half-clothed form; and

he clearly showed, in contrast, the vigor of the sinews which upheld her and the tremendous rage of the sea. These he had shown, and all else he had omitted. There is nothing unusual here, you may say — any artist would have gone about his task in just this manner. But how many would have known what Homer knew — that among the things to omit was the sailor's face? How many would have felt that to paint it as it must be painted, if at all, would be to distract attention from the principal figure, to create two centres of interest, to weaken, not enhance, the impressiveness of the whole? And how many could have effected the omission so simply yet significantly? — the sailor's scarf had blown across his face and thus we saw that fierce winds as well as waters warred against him. These were the elements of strength in the "Life Buoy;" its beauty sprang from its bold color, and especially from the admirable pose and contour of the woman's form beneath the scanty clinging dress.

The second picture I have in mind is "Undertow" — again a wrestle of man with the water. Two half-drowned young

bathers, locked in one another's arms, lie prone between two sturdy beach-men who are dragging them ashore with a rope, a lofty blue-green wave curving close behind. Until we saw this picture we had not known the whole of what linear beauty might mean under Homer's brush. He had never so triumphantly proved that to secure it one need not lapse into mere decorative grace, need not sacrifice the expression of intense activity or the strictest truth to every-day facts. These men with their half-bare bodies were New-Englanders in form and feature, and were honestly intent upon the difficult work in hand; and the one bather whose face was shown was as clearly American in type. Yet it was a very beautiful face, and the lines of all the figures — not arranged in a conventional group but boldly placed in sequence side by side — had that harmony and dignity which we call Greek, for no better reason than that so few of us know how to see and appreciate them when by some happy chance actual existence sets them before our eyes. Nothing was lacking to the beauty of this group — neither force nor suavity, neither unity nor variety, neither

repose of effect nor the suggestion of tremendous effort; and the strong lines of the overarching wave bound the whole together as the lines of a pediment bind some antique sculptured composition. Yet how true it all was, how American, how local —at once realistic and heroic, powerful and simple, natural and almost majestic.

As regards color there were some who called this picture too bold and vivid, too crude and hard. But the timidity of their eyes was more in fault, I think, than the painter's vigor. Poor house-bound folk that we are, we have never really learned to see. We know so well how things look in a mellow indoor atmosphere and a light which falls aslant from one or two points, and thus means shadow as much as light, that when we get outdoors we cannot receive the new impression. Few of us ever really see what light means when, in clear metallic air, it falls from above, equally diffused on every side and overpoweringly strong; or what colors mean when such light creates them and sends forth each vivid tint to be reflected from the others. Thus we called unnatural many of those effects which were revealed to us, a few

years ago, by the French Impressionists — effects which had been carefully studied out of doors by eyes made sensitive through years of practice, and unflinchingly portrayed by clever hands. When the Impressionists surprised us it would have been well had we gone out under the sky and tried to discover whether things do not sometimes really look thus impossibly vivid — thus oddly blue, singularly green, unbelievably purple or white or yellow. And when we saw Homer's "Undertow" we might well have asked ourselves whether he was not likely to know more about nature's facts than we — this serious, studious artist who is also one of the best endowed that has been born among us; this artist who lives his life on the shores of the ocean, and whose life means simply to observe effects with wise, keen eyes, and to paint them with a trained and capable brush. If we ever really see wet flesh under strong summer light with the reflections of blue-green water upon it, we shall surely note colors as bright and strong and hard as Homer painted.

Of course, truth in art is one thing, beauty is another; and to insist upon the

veracity of a painter is not to insist that he paints beautiful pictures. Moreover, in the matter of color at least, we may possibly feel that it is better to have beauty without complete truth than truth alone. But the perception of beauty as well as of truth is largely a matter of education, and here again our eyes are still too timid, our creed is still too narrow, the practice of the old masters and the traditions of the studio still hamper our taste and limit our powers of enjoyment. The beauty of Homer's coloring may be left for individual taste to pronounce upon; but I think a growth in the power to appreciate its veracity will mean increasing pleasure in its vividness and force.

V.

I began this chapter by saying that Homer holds a separate and peculiar place in American art. He was born with a different nature from most painters of his day, and with so strong a nature that he took no impress from their practice or ideas; and he was born too soon to be drawn into the current which, some fifteen years ago, set strongly towards the studios of France. From be-

ginning to end, and as regards alike essence and form, he has worked out his art for himself.

In all the underlying essentials which go to make a man an artist as distinguished from a painter merely, his success has been complete. There are few men alive who can be counted his peers in vigor of idea or clearness of conception, or in the application of these powers to truly painter-like ends. He knows what things one may put on canvas and what things should be left to other forms of art; and those he chooses he reports upon as a painter should — without reliance on titles or printed explanations. He can impress the mind, move the heart, stir the imagination, by his pictures; and at the same time can satisfy the eye with their veracity, and delight it with their magnificent effects of line. There is more question, I have just confessed, as regards his success with color; and as regards his execution even his profoundest admirers must admit a lack of charm although no lack of competence. Forced to invent his technical language for himself, even yet, after all these years of constant improvement, it is not polished, deft, or graceful. We could

never care for his brushwork in and for itself, apart from the message it interprets, as we do care for the most beautiful kinds of painting. Our chief concern, as we approach his work, is not to see how he has painted but what he has painted. Nevertheless his brushwork is good, strong, adequate, and satisfactory. It is sure of itself, without hesitations, confusions, or blunders. It always reaches its end — it always says what he wants it to say; and this we can never affirm of painting that is less than very good. It is blunt, perhaps, and rugged, uncompromising, and naïve; but so is the language of some great provincial Burns which for worlds we would not see softened, sweetened, and polished into likeness with a Tennyson's or Rossetti's. Had Homer been born a little later and taken his youthful way to Paris, he might very well have conquered "the painter's stubborn means" with a more graceful hand. But I think it is an open question whether, in such a case, he would not have lost something of that strong, brusque, determined quality of touch which seems to suit so well his salty seas and sunburned mariners. And his handiwork has, moreover, one conspicuous point

of excellence which it might easily have lost in the schools. It is never self-conscious. In every brush-stroke, as in every conception, Homer is simply and sincerely himself. We can never fancy that he has wanted to convince us either that he could paint like some one else or that no one else could paint as he does. And this is a refreshing fact in days when almost all men go about their work as though they knew that centuries of great forerunners were watching them from the pyramid of fine accomplishment.

But the lesson which young Americans should learn from Winslow Homer is not that they may become artists without the training of the schools. He may seem to supply a good text for such a lesson, but it is a dangerous one to preach. For most men the safest, surest road to success must lie through the wisest, strictest teaching they can get. The real lesson which Homer teaches is that, once an American has learned how to paint, the best place for him is at home. Should we care as much for Homer's pictures had he persistently dwelt among the peasants of Barbizon or the throngs of Parisian streets? Would he

have cared as much for them himself — put as much of his own nature into them? Could a foreigner have put his own nature into such themes as his and preserved their Americanism? And lacking either the personal quality or the national quality which they now reveal, could they have been as valuable an addition to the sum of the world's work in art?

Of course if a painter has no thoughts, no imagination, no soul or individuality of any kind — nothing but two eyes trained to see what other men have seen and five clever fingers — then indeed it matters little where he lives or what he paints. A charming touch and a delicate perception of skin-deep facts can show themselves equally well with almost any subject; and, unassisted by deeper gifts, they cannot greatly differentiate one subject from another. But given a painter with a brain and a heart, — a man who sees for himself and puts something of himself into all he does, — then his sight will surely be clearer and his doing stronger if he lives where he was born and bred. His work will have more individuality, and without individuality no art can rank very high.

This is true, I think, even of artists whose impulse leads them in what are called idealistic paths. I have tried to explain that it was true of George Fuller; and even such nobly ideal work as John La Farge's owes much of its value to the American flavor which no keen palate fails to find in it. But with the born realist the case is far clearer. A transplanted La Farge would not have lost so much as a transplanted Homer; and it is new Homers rather than new La Farges that we may anticipate, — for, whether the fact be counted a happy one or not, most men are born realists in these modern days.

Thus I think that an artist in any country should strive to belong to his own land and people. But there is an added reason why Americans should try to be American. Personality is the great essential in every kind of art; and the farther time advances — the fuller becomes the world's store of inherited treasures — the more difficult it grows, of course, for an artist to preserve himself from the undue influence of others. One mine after another is opened and exploited. One line after another is pursued to its furthest limit. One kind of truth,

one form of beauty, follows another into the category of the things which have been done so well that few men can hope to do them better or even to do them differently. Of course there can never come a time when a great genius will not turn to the exhausted mine and pick up a novel jewel, will not show us hackneyed things in ways that make them seem as fresh and new as the flowers in Eden. But how many young Americans who hope to be artists expect to be men of great genius? And for all others at least, and perhaps for the great genius too, there is value in the intrinsic freshness of a theme that no one yet has touched. Of course it is more difficult to paint such a theme. He who portrays a thing first has to begin by learning how to look at it from the point of view of art — to estimate its artistic capability, to create the artistic type it may assume, to discover every major and minor fact with regard to its right rendering. Before Millet painted laboring peasants, the world thought they could not possibly be painted; and he was Millet just because he saw they could and found out the way to do it. Pygmies can stand on the giant's shoulders now. To-day a hun-

dred men can make good pictures of peasants who, fifty years ago, could not have imagined how the task might be approached. But how much do we care for the whole hundred in comparison with one Millet?

It is not merely because he was the first that he still seems the best; the phrase must be turned around: — because he was the best, he was the one who did a new thing first. If any of his hundred followers had his power, they too would do something that neither he nor others had accomplished. The great value of America to the painter is that it is full of new things to be done. Many of them are not beautiful, or charming, or picturesque, or even possible, according to our accepted standards. But the accepted standards of to-day mean merely the codified triumphs of earlier artists over difficulties which once seemed insuperable. The peasants of contemporary France, the types and colors of oriental lands, the hooped and be-ribboned beauties of the eighteenth century, the misshapen jesters of Philip IV., the boors and Jews of Holland, even the padded and brocaded ladies of Venice — all these were novelties in their day, difficult subjects, impossible

subjects according to the canons of preceding times. But each in its turn was brought victoriously within the realm of art, and now all are classics of the studio, easy things to treat, things that can be painted reasonably well without a shimmer of genius or a trace of individual thought, merely by studying the recipes which lie in a thousand canvases. Who shall say that American landscapes, American types, characters, incidents, and deeds, are more difficult than all others, or that painters and sculptors who are genuine artists cannot bring them in their turn within the boundaries of art?

If there is any one to say so, names enough can already be cited to prove him mistaken. Think of La Farge, St. Gaudens, Inness, Chase, Cox, Weir, Twachtman, Fuller, and Winslow Homer — the list is unjustly brief but it suffices, — and can it be maintained that expatriation in body or soul is the American artist's better course? Some of these men are Winslow Homer's superiors if the whole sum of their achievement, mental, spiritual, and technical, is counted up. But none of them is better able to teach American artists that they should be

Americans; for none has been so persistently and emphatically national, so freshly, frankly local and realistic in choice of theme; and none of them except George Fuller — who with all his charm was by no means so remarkable an artist as Homer — has leaned so little on the Old World for counsel or correction.

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